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ALL AROUND

THE WIZARD OF THE WAVES.

By L. PHILIPS.

The dusky wretches, in their buoyant canoes, fairly hemmed him in, and by a flash of lightning he saw half a hundred keen lances directed at him.

WEEKLY.

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ALL AROUND WEEKLY

CONTAINING STORIES OF ALL KINDS

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THE WIZARD OF THE WAVES

OR,

(A STORY OF LIFE AND ADVENTURE ON LAND AND SEA)

By L. PHILIPS

CHAPTER I.

DRIVEN FROM HOME.

It was a strange tableau upon which we ring up the curtain.

The night was wild and tempestuous.

Standing on the threshold of a carved, oaken door, half in the light that streams up from the corridor, is a young man, apparently about twenty years of age, while behind him, pointing out into the dismal night, leans a man whose face betrays the flight of twenty years.

Yet that face was reproduced in the young man's, and it needed no second glance to assure on that they were father and son.

It is only the old—old story—wine and cards, an angry father, lost fortune, and, henceforth, a home like the beggar, in the wet, wretched streets of the Great Metropolis.

He looks at the miserable gutters, where the filth boils down to the reeking sewers, a repentant light steals into his eyes, then he glances back at his father, and those eyes supplicate for mercy where none is to be expected.

The old man raises his hand and waves him off.

"Go!" That is all he says, but it is enough.

Fred Temple draws his coat closer about him, pulls his hat down over his eyes, whence the supplicating light has flown to be replaced by a hard, stony glare that means anything but forgiveness, and starts down the broad stone steps.

His father still watches.

"1—2—3—4—5—6!"

He hears it peal forth from the clock, and it reaches the ears of his son also.

Lifting his head, Frex fixed his eyes upon his father and said, brokenly:

"It is a cold bed you have planned for me to-night, Horatio Temple, and the hour has just tolled that marks my ruin.

"In your bed of down, think of me in the streets, and know that whatever may be my end, you have caused it.

"The ties of relationship no longer exist between us; you may make a son of my cousin, but though you thus find a new heir to your wealth, you can never blot the memories of the son your temper ruined!"

Then he turned away, the door slammed softly, the light was cut off, and there was nothing before him but misery and despair.

From the window above a dark face pressed against the glass, and evil eyes followed Fred till he was lost to sight; then the watcher let the curtain drop and fell back into the embrace of an arm-chair, muttering, with a smile of satisfaction:

"Gaston Meers, that's the best card you have played yet. It trumps the pack and gives you the stakes—Fred Temple's ruin, your establishment for life as the heir of a million, and—and, perhaps, the hand of Ethel Fair! Good—good!"

The person who spoke those words was about the age of Fred, and was the cousin to whom he alluded as he turned away from his father's door—driven from home!

He had his suspicions regarding the person who had

betrayed his love for the gaming table to his father, and he was not far out in his surmise as the sequel will show.

"It's all no use fretting," he muttered, as he passed into Broadway. "I've got to face the music, so I wustn't mind the time. But it was pretty rough on dad's part to come down on a fellow in that two-forty style without a moment's grace, but as Thingamy says: 'What's to be, will be,' so I won't growl.

"I wish it had happened, though, when I had a few hundred in my pockets; but as it is, I don't believe I have a dime to my name. I wish I could rake up money enough to try a game to win enough for a bed, for I can't sleep in the streets."

He walked on a few paces in deep thought, then he suddenly came to a standstill with a shrill, prolonged whistle.

"Pshaw! By Jove! why didn't I think of that before? Huzza! who cares for the governor now? I've got my watch and chain and diamonds. They're good for a stake, and I mean to raise the wind to-night, anyhow."

Poor fellow! the fatal fascination of the cards was fully upon him, and, like many another poor wretch, he was unable to break the net, and was prepared now to risk all—even his life—on the game of chance.

He felt lighter with the knowledge that the wherewithal to gamble was in his possession, and he never once thought of putting it to a better use.

He was whistling gay snatches of a popular song as he ran up the steps of the gambling den, and pushed open the green door.

"Hello, Fred!"

"How are you, Temple?"

"Buck the tiger again?

"What's the lay?"

"Take a seat."

These and various other exclamations greeted him as he entered the brilliantly-lit apartment and flung himself down upon a chair.

"How are you, Chester?"

"Bang up. In for a game?"

"You bet. That's me every time," replied Fred, coolly, tilting his chair, and lighting his last cigar.

The gambler laughed.

"You're a cool hand, Temple."

"Cool as they make 'em, my boy."

"What is it?"

"Keno."

"Good!"

They drew over to a party just forming, and began to play.

Hour after hour the sport went on, and had Fred Temple left the table when the clock struck one, he might have awoke next morning the possessor of a cool thousand; but he let the chance slip, and played on till fortune changed, and he was losing rapidly.

"Keno!"

He had lost again, and in twenty minutes from that time he had lost everything down to a diamond upon his finger.

This was all that remained, and pulling it off, the unhappy youth flung it upon the table.

Chester whistled.

"What's the racket? Money gone?"

"Yes."

"Then why not give a note?"

"I can't; the governor has disowned me."

There was a strange twinkle in the gambler's eye as the youth spoke those words, and the game proceeded without another word.

"Keno!"

Fred had lost.

"Are you done?" laughed Chester.

"No, by Heaven! Here's my coat."

"Done!"

The minutes spun out. Fred covered his spaces eagerly, but his luck was gone.

"Keno!"

"I am ruined!"

"Have you nothing else?"

"Nothing."

Harry Chester beckoned a negro to him.

"Well, marser?" for Chester was the keeper of the house.

"Show the gentleman the door."

Fred Temple's face grew white, and he forced a hollow laugh.

"See here, old boy," he said, "I haven't a 'red' to my name. Just let me have a bed here to-night, and——"

"Show him the door!" broke in Chester.

For a moment Fred was as one stricken dumb.

He took a step forward, but the burly negro seized him by the shoulder, and the next instant he was standing hatless and coatless in the pelting rain.

"Ruined! ruined!" he cried. "And these are the men I have trusted, who take my last penny, and then turn me into the street to starve, for aught they care. Heaven have mercy on me, the river is my only hope!"

He reeled away as he spoke, but at that moment a pale face and a tattered form issued from beneath the shadow of the great stone steps, and ran across the wet pave to the spot where Fred had been standing.

This figure was that of a boy, apparently not more than fifteen years of age.

His clothes were several sizes too large for him, and hung about his attenuated form in numberless tatters that fluttered in the night air.

His dark-brown hair was put away in a tumbled mass beneath his torn cap, but there was a certain soft loveliness about his face that seemed to speak of higher breeding than the gutters, and superior companionship to that of the Metropolitan mud-larks.

"He's going to drown himself; I heard him say it!" cried the gamin, a startled look coming into his big blue eyes. "It's terrible, it is for such a thing to be, and if I can help it, I don't mean to let him do it. P'raps if I talk with him, he'll change his mind. Anyhow, I mean to try."

And with these words the gamin darted after Fred, whose form had long since been swallowed up in the darkness, as, wet, wretched and heartbroken, he trudged on towards the swollen river.

Reaching the next corner, the boy was surprised to find no one in sight.

"He's slipped me!" he cried, "but I mean to follow and find him!"

He dashed hurriedly onward, and just as he came within sight and sound of the river, he saw Fred some hundred

yards in advance of him, just staggering down the piers towards the stream.

The gamin made a spurt and darted after him.

Still clasping his hands over his eyes, Fred reeled out upon the string-piece, and turned his white face up towards the angry skies.

Heaven forgive me!" cried the poor fellow; "the world is wide and cold. Receive my soul, Oh, Heaven, and——"

"Stop!"

A hand was laid upon his shoulder; he turned quickly around, and the gamin stood beside him, breathless with his long run.

"What do you want?" cried Fred, shivering in his wet shirt.

"Don't do that. You don't look like a coward, and only cowards destroy themselves."

Fred drew back with a gasp from the sight of the dark river.

"Perhaps you are right," he said. "Who are you?"

"My name's Butts; I'm a newsboy. Don't kill yourself. I saw you come out of Chester's, and I know they've robbed you; but don't despair. Go home."

"Alas, Butts, I have none. My father drove me forth to-night for gambling, but, madly infuriated with the game, I have risked and lost all again."

"Phew! that's bad. What's your name?"

"Call me Fred; I have discarded my surname of Temple."

"Well, then, Fred," said Butts, "why don't you look for a place to work instead of giving way like that? See here, I hang out around the Bowery; just find a place to stow yourself to-night and meet me on the corner of Chatham and Catherine streets to-morrow morning and I'll go with you to find a job.

"Come away from the river now, do. Listen, there's two o'clock striking; it's day. Come."

Fred allowed himself to be drawn away, and walked up to the street where it met the pier.

"Butts, you've saved me," he said. "I will meet you to-morrow. Good-night."

He pressed the gamin's hand and strode away. Poor fellow, he felt lighter of heart just then, but he did not dream of the misery yet in store for him.

CHAPTER II.

"THERE STANDS MY ASSASSIN!"

Leaving Butts, Fred hastened toward Broadway, reaching which thoroughfare he walked swiftly along till he came to the junction of Fifth avenue.

Passing up the silent thoroughfare, he bent his footsteps in the direction of his father's house.

"He may shut me out," he muttered, "but I can at least find shelter in the receptacle beneath the front stoop, which will serve me well enough for to-night."

As he drew within a few feet of the old home, he was surprised to see a policeman dart up the steps and pass quickly through the door.

Fred stopped short.

"Whew!" he whistled; "what's up?"

The next instant another officer ran up the steps, disappeared through the door, and lights could be plainly seen flashing past the windows.

"Something in the wind," he mused, "and I'm going to ferret it out."

He had just taken a step forward when a carriage dashed around the corner, drew up before the door, and a burly man leaped to the wet pave and darted into the house.

"Dr. Fisher!" cried Fred. "Father must be ill!"

Hardly had he recovered from his surprise, ere a young man about his own size sprang from the vehicle and began securing the horse to the hitching-post.

It was Gaston Meers, and Fred recognized him on the instant.

But, however, before he could take a step forward, a figure sprang from the shadow of the house opposite and ran over to Meers.

"Harry Chester, as I live!" cried Fred. "There is something afoot, and I'm not going to stand here wondering without seeking to find out what all this mystery means. I hate Gaston; I know he was the man who betrayed me to my father, but I'll stifle my feelings and accost him."

So saying, he ran forward to the two men.

"Oh, Gaston!" he cried, "what has happened? Is father——"

Thud!

Something struck him upon the head and he fell like a log to the earth.

"Good, Gaston," laughed Chester; "well struck, my boy!"

And he snatched the loaded carriage whip with which the blow had been dealt, from the hand of Meers.

"Quick! lift him up. This is a lucky night for you."

They raised him between them and hurled him down into the courtyard of the house.

Quick as a flash, Gaston Meers bent over him and then ran back to the sidewalk.

"Fly!" he cried to Chester, as he saw that Fred, injured by the fall down the steps of the courtyard, was coming to his senses. "Fly, Harry, I will alarm the house!"

Chester darted off in the darkness, and springing up the stone steps, Gaston Meers flung open the door and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Help—help—help!"

The next instant a party of half a dozen police darted down the stairs, and ran to him.

"What's the matter?"

"What's up?"

Turning to Fred, who had arisen to his feet, Gaston Meers leveled his finger and cried:

"Secure the assassin!"

Before Fred was sufficiently recovered to speak, he was seized by the officers and hurried into the house.

Then the door of his father's chamber was flung open and he was shoved in roughly.

The room was full of people.

On the floor lay the coat he had gambled away at Chester's, and his father's desk was upset in one corner, while lying on the bed, and grasping his watch and broken chain, lay Horatio Temple!

Fred drew back with a gasp, and then it was he saw for

the first time the other half of the chain which lay in the dying man's hand, and which he (Fred) had also lost at Chester's, hung from his vest.

"Great Heaven! What does this mean?" he cried, springing forward.

The sound aroused the dying man; he opened his eyes and fixed them on his son with a feeble gasp.

"Doctor!" he cried.

"Well?" eagerly demanded Dr. Fisher, bending over the dying man.

"Doctor, listen to me," he gasped, drawing himself up and leveling his finger at Fred, "listen well, and mark my words. I saw the man who stabbed me while at my desk, and as I hope for mercy hereafter, I swear to you, there stands my assassin!"

"No—no—no!" cried Fred, darting to the side of the dying man, "do not say so! Indeed you are mistaken. Think, father, ere you condemn me; you are dying, and in an hour it will be too late to retract. I tell you it is some horrible jugglery; I am innocent—I am innocent!"

"Hold, rash youth!" gurgled his father, "do not add a lie to the crime. You it was who entered at that window, and as the clock struck two, dealt me my death blow!"

"At two o'clock!" cried Fred. "Father, I can prove an alibi. At that hour I stood on the pier talking to a newsboy called Butts. I am to meet him to-morrow on the corner of Chatham and Catherine streets. Let the officers go with me; he will clear me."

"Will he?" hissed Gaston Meers, as he slipped from the room and darted toward the street.

Horatio Temple lifted himself in the bed and raised his hand.

"Hear my words! At two o'clock I was dealt my death blow, and I swear that Frederick Temple is my assassin! I curse him with my dying breath!"

Then he fell back upon the bed, his hands clenched convulsively, his eyes rolled upward then a long sigh, and his chin dropped.

He was dead, and with his last breath had cursed the son whose only folly was his love of gaming.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSING LINK.

Fred's eyes closed in horror as his father's dying curse rang in his ears, and he hung his head heavily.

"He is dead!" he heard the doctor say, and when next he gazed upon the bed, he knew that he had spoken truly.

"Dead!" he repeated, in a bewildered tone, "dead! and with his last breath he cursed one who is more entitled to his pity than anathemas!"

He passed his hand over his brow and glanced around in a dazed manner.

He was looking for Gaston Meers.

"He was here a moment since," he muttered; "what new deviltry is afoot?"

Then turning to Dr. Fisher, he said:

"Doctor, you have known me all my life; you knew my dear mother also; by the memory of her I swear to you I am innocent of this charge. It is all a horrible mistake, and if you and these gentlemen, the officers, will grant me a few minutes' private interview, I think I can throw some light upon this affair."

Dr. Fisher arose, came forward, and laid his hand on Fred's shoulder.

"Frederick," he said, solemnly, looking the accused squarely in the eyes, "as you say, I have known you all your life, and judging you by that knowledge, I am certain you are innocent; and if these gentlemen will accede to your request, I shall, on my part, be only too happy to hear you speak the words which will go far to save you from the punishment my heart tells me you do not merit."

The doctor was a pompous old fellow, but his heart was in the right place, and, as he ceased speaking, Fred felt the tears drip down on his hands.

He looked up through the mist in his own eyes, and murmured:

"Bless you, sir, I can prove my innocence. Come."

He led the way to the library, followed by the doctor and the officers, and closing the door, locked it securely.

He waved the others to seats where they could see his every movement, and then sat down facing them.

Day was not far distant, and he heralded it with joy, feeling that the morning would prove his innocence.

Poor fellow! he little dreamed how lightly the net was weaving, even at this moment, and how much more difficult that innocence would be to prove when daylight should come.

"Now for it," he said, setting himself deeply into the easy chair.

"Who it was that informed my father, I do not pretend to know, but it is certain that he was told this evening that I squandered my money at the gambling table, and in a fit of rage he turned me from the house and bade me never more to darken his doors. I had not a cent in my pockets as I left, but I had my watch and chain and diamonds, and burning with the love of play, I went to Chester's den and lost all—even the coat you found lying in my father's room.

"I begged for a bed for the night; but I had lost my last cent and was turned out into the storm like a dog.

"Ruined and homeless as I was, it is not to be wondered at that I bent my footsteps towards the river with the intention of putting an end to my miserable existence.

"But Heaven interfered, and the boy, Butts, persuaded me it was only the act of a coward, and exacted a promise from me to meet him at Chatham and Catherine streets to-morrow morning, to search for work. It struck two o'clock before I left, which in itself will prove I was not on the scene of the murder at that hour.

"Well, to continue. I walked directly from the piers here, intending to find a bed under the front stoop, but as I approached what was my surprise to behold a number of police pass into the house. A minute after, Dr. Fisher and Gaston Meers drove up. The doctor entered the house, but just as he disappeared, Gaston was joined by Chester, the gambler, with whom he began talking.

"Certain that something was wrong, I determined to speak with Gaston, and running up, confronted him.

"Then it was that I was dealt a heavy blow upon the

head, and remember no more until these gentlemen brought me to the bedside of my father.

"How that coat came here, how the fragment of the watch chain came in my vest, I know not; both were lost at Chester's. That is all I have to say, but it is the truth, every word."

He ceased speaking; the silver streaks of dawn lit up the east; the precious, yet fatal day had broken.

Fred had spoken freely, and with that air of frankness that carries truth and lures conviction with it, and more than half the officers felt inclined to believe him.

"You say this little fellow, who, by the way, I know to be a good and truthful lad, asked you to meet him in the morning?" queried one of the officers, who, from the active part he had taken, Fred rightly judged to be a superior.

"Yes, sir," he replied.

"Did he state the time?"

"No; he only said the 'morning,' but I fancy newsboys arise early."

"Very good," responded the officer. "You must now accompany me to jail, and as speedily as possible I will go to the place of meeting, and even if the boy does not appear, I am well aware of the place where he lives, Mother Croaker's den in Baxter street, and will seek him there. Then if you have spoken the truth, it will be no difficult matter to clear you."

The officer arose, unlocked the door, and Fred followed him down the steps and out into the street to the police station.

"Keep up a good heart, Fred, my boy," said Dr. Fisher, as the cell door closed upon our hero, "and all will yet be well."

"Thank you, sir, I am sure it will. My only hope is that this gentleman may find Butts without delay, for even a moment's suspicion is galling to me."

"Never mind," replied the officer with a smile, "I don't often say so to prisoners, but I think you are innocent and I am fully prepared to give the words of Butts much weight, although I haven't seen the lad around for over a week."

Then the officer and the good doctor left him, and Fred laid down to snatch a few moments' sleep.

Contrary to his expectation, he did succeed in dozing off, and did not wake until aroused by the official to hear the worst news it was possible to receive at that time.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT BUTTS HEARD.

Let us turn back a trifle, and see what really had become of Butts.

We left him standing at the head of the pier on the night when he had saved Fred Temple from destroying himself.

He remained there in the drenching rain for some time watching after Fred, then he turned upon his heel and walked briskly up towards the Bowery.

"I guess he's safe," he muttered, as he passed onward. "Butts, my boy, you've saved a fellow being to-night, and that's one good deed for you. Poor fellow, he looked awful bad! and I'm glad I saw him as I did. Je-mima! if I hadn't, he'd have been at the bottom of the river now.

"He's a 'nob,' that's plain to see; and he won't know how to work, or where to look for it. Never mind, I've seen several signs out in the stores up Broadway, and I'll steer him there to-morrow. I guess he'll fill the bill.

"Phew! how it rains; and won't Mother Croaker holler when I drop in and wake her up at this hour? Oh, no! maybe not. She's looking around too sharp, and may find out more than I want her to know, if I'm not careful."

And thus soliloquizing, Butts picked his way up the Bowery to Baxter street, reaching which thoroughfare, he turned briskly up and darted into the shanty.

All was in darkness as he reached the door, but he struck the panels sharply with his knuckles, and then stepped back to await a reply.

He was not kept long.

"Who's there?" snapped the unmistakable voice of Mother Croaker.

"Me—Butts. Let me in, I'm all wet!"

He heard the shambling footsteps across the floor, then the door was flung open, and the old hag seized him by the arm and pulled him into the room.

"Pretty how do you do, staying out till this hour, and then arouse decent people from their beds! Where's yer money?"

"There it is," responded Butts, dropping two nickels and three coppers into her greasy palm; "bed and breakfast—thirteen cents."

Mother Croaker counted the money, dropped it into her pocket with a grunt of satisfaction and waved the boy towards the sleeping apartment.

"Good-night, mammy!" cried Butts, as he passed into the room and flung himself down upon his mattress of straw, dressed as he was.

"Shut yer mouth and go to sleep!" was the gracious response, as the dirty hag, like her youthful "boarders," flung herself down upon the bed, dressed in her daily garb.

Indeed, I am tempted to say her yearly garb, for she never was known to wear another dress, and not one of her youthful boarders ever saw that one removed—such a thing would have filled them with dismay, and Mother Croaker would indeed lose her reputation, beyond all recovery.

For some time Butts heard her mumbling and muttering to herself, then his eyelids grew heavy, and he drifted into a deep, dreamless slumber.

How long he remained in this condition he never knew; it could not have been long, for he was awakened abruptly by the sound of voices, and saw that day had not yet broken.

A light was burning in the back or dining-room—the door was closed, but he saw this from beneath it.

"Halloo!" he muttered, "mammy's got a visitor."

He sat up in bed and listened.

He could hear the boys snoring, but for the space of a moment, nothing else.

The rickety old clock on the shelf in the room between kept up its dreary ticking, and he fancied he heard a slight chinking sound from the dining-room.

"How much?" he heard Mother Croaker say.

"One thousand dollars," came back in the unmistakable tones of a man's voice.

Butts pricked up his ears.

"Phew!" he whistled, softly. "One thousand dollars! What's mammy doing with all that! Jingo! I'll have a peep."

He crept gently forward, passed over the boys between himself and the door, and drew himself up to his feet.

His thin, wet shoes emitted no sound as he tip-toed his way forward, and sinking on his knee, he applied his eye to the key-hole.

A tallow dip stuck in the neck of a black bottle lit up the scene, and by the flickering of this, he could see Mother Croaker bending over a man who was piling up pieces of gold upon the table, while another stood behind his chair.

The face of the man counting out the money he could not see, but the one of the fellow behind him was thoroughly distinguishable.

"Chester, the gambler, by jingo!" murmured Butts. "Now what the deuce brings him here? I thought he ran with the 'nobs' and not with scum of Mother Croaker's sort.

"I wonder who the other fellow is, in the gray suit? I wish he'd raise his head or remove his hat so that I could get a fair look at his face. He's 'tony,' too. Halloo! Mother Croaker's pocketing the gold. Phew! what a raise! One thousand dollars!"

And true enough she had pocketed the money, and then sat down directly before the man in gray, completely hiding him from view.

"Well, I'll do it!" she said.

"Good!" responded Harry Chester, bringing his hand down upon the table, which act elicited a cautionary:

"Sh-h-h-h! you'll wake the kids!" from Mother Croaker.

The man in gray next spoke; Butts could not see him, but heard the voice, and saw that neither Mother Croaker nor the gambler were speaking.

"Then you agree to the terms?" the man said. "One thousand now and two more after he is put out of the way."

"That's it," presactly," said the woman. "Now, how's the job to be done?"

"Oh," returned the man in gray, quickly. "There must be no bloodshed. This gentleman will attend to him, won't you, Harry?"

"Bet your life!" replied Chester.

This time Mother Croaker shifted her position a little, and the light shone fully on the face of the man in gray.

Butts drew back with a murmur of surprise.

"By jingo!" he ejaculated, "it's Fred, the young fellow that was going to drown himself!"

CHAPTER V.

TRAPPED.

At that moment the man in gray arose, and Butts got a better view of him.

"No, it isn't Fred, either," he cried. "It looks very much like him, but it isn't him, after all. Pshaw! I might have known it. Fred was dressed in black and was in his shirt sleeves, this man has a new suit of gray.

"Hallo! they're coming here! I must drop back in bed, or I may get my throat cut like the fellow they were talking of, whoever he may be."

He sprang back to his pallet of straw, and flung himself down upon his back.

The next moment, Mother Croaker led the way into the sleeping apartment, followed by Chester and the stranger in gray, who looked so much like Fred Temple, and whom the reader has no doubt recognized as Gaston Meers.

"Which is the bed?" he heard Chester ask, and then closed his eyes lest they should discover that he was awake.

"Third one from the window on the left side," replied Mother Croaker, in a semi-whisper.

Butts' heart began to beat wildly.

The bed mentioned was his!

What did they want with him!

Poor fellow! he was soon to learn.

"Softly now," whispered Mother Croaker. "Don't wake the kids."

"Never fear," replied Chester. "Oh, by the way, the boys are very fond of him you said?"

"Yes," nodded the woman.

"Well, you can tell them he's stolen something, and the cops are after him, and if they want to hide him that they must swear he's not been seen for a week. It will be easy to persuade them that he has skipped the town."

"Leave that to me, pards."

Butts' breath was coming and going in gasps.

He heard Chester tip-toe his way to his side, and then, by his breathing, knew that he was bent over him.

"What are they going to do?" he thought. "I mustn't move or cry out, or they will surely kill me!"

He heard the unmistakable sound of a cork being drawn from a bottle, and then the gurgle of liquid as it was poured out.

A second's suspense, then a wet cloth was laid over his mouth and nostrils.

At the same time, Gaston Meers grasped his arms, Mother Croaker seized his feet and held him down.

Butts felt that he was strangling.

A hissing noise rang in his ears, myriads of flashing stars passed before his eyes, and a feeling of being tossed upon a heavy sea swept over his entire body.

This was only for an instant.

The singing, the stars, the swaying motion gradually grew fainter and fainter, then ceased altogether, and all was oblivion.

The drug had done its work, and Butts, the newsboy, the sole living being who could clear Fred Temple of the charge made against him, and establish his innocence in the eyes of the world, was powerless in the hands of his enemies.

* * * * * * *

When next Butts awoke, he was lying on his back, and all was darkness.

He put his hand out and felt straw beneath him.

"Have I been dreaming?" he asked himself. "Here I am in my own bed, and it is not yet day. Jinjo! I'm not sleepy, anyhow, but deuced dry. I'll just step over the boys, go into the dining-room, and get a drink of water. Je-mima! I've had the nightmare badly. Guess it'll soon be time to meet that fellow, Fred."

He got up in his bed, and calculating the distance he would have to stride to pass over the next sleeper, stepped forward.

As his foot came to the floor, he sprang back with a shriek.

He had trodden upon stone!

"Great heavens! what does this mean?" he cried. "Am I dreaming still?"

He stooped, passed his hands over the ground, and a cold perspiration broke out all over him.

Light dawned upon his bewildered brain, and the poor little chap knew at once he was imprisoned in a cellar.

"Oh, it's all real!" he moaned, "and there is some desperate plot afoot to put me out of the way.

"I heard that man in gray say: 'One thousand now, and two more after he is put out of the way.' What is my miserable life to him, that he should pay such an enormous sum to have it cut short? I'm only Butts, the Newsboy; what difference can my death make to a man who spends thousands so easily?"

In vain the little fellow puzzled his brain to find out—he knew that the money had been paid, that he really was a prisoner, and that was all.

The darkness was intense.

He wandered about from wall to wall, passing his hands along the damp stones in search of a door, window, any thing by which he might escape; but the effort was in vain—no such place existed.

Then he fell to wondering how entrance was effected to the place, but the more questions he plied himself with, the less capable he became of answering even the smallest.

"I wonder if they mean to starve me to death?" he muttered, as, thoroughly disheartened, he flung himself down upon his pallet of straw, and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, it's frightful! I wonder if they could hear me from the street, if I cried out? There's nothing lost by trying, and here goes."

Then he put his hands to his mouth, and shouted till the confined space fairly rang with ear-splitting echoes:

"Help! murder! help!"

He heard a rumbling sound, then a trap overhead was pushed open, and Harry Chester peered down upon him.

He held a taper in his hand, that lit up the place.

"Oh, you're awake, are you?" cried Chester. "Just stop your noise. I'm going to bring a gentleman down to see you."

Butts drew back, shivering, and flung himself down on the straw.

There was a slight rustling sound, then a ladder of rope and wooden rungs dropped through the open trap and dangled down into the cellar.

Chester put two fingers to his lips and gave a shrill whistle.

A cloaked figure glided to his side.

"Well?" the new-comer asked.

"All right," responded Chester. "Come right down."

Grasping the rungs of the ladder Chester lowered himself into the cellar.

Stepping back Chester raised the light to allow the cloaked stranger to descend to the vault.

Butts glared at him with eyes bulging from their sockets.

The stranger took a step forward; the cloak fell from his shoulders, and the light shone fully over his figure.

"Phew!" muttered Butts, "the man who paid Mother Croaker to dispose of me."

CHAPTER VI.

A BOLD STROKE.

It must be confessed that the newsboy's heart fluttered wildly at the sight of Gaston Meers; nor can we blame him, for the lad really imagined his last hour had come.

He crouched back in the straw and fastened his eyes upon the new-comer with a glare of mingled curiosity and despair.

Chester picked up the cloak that had fallen from the shoulders of Meers, and then glided forward to Butts.

There was an empty wine cask near by, and rolling this over beside the newsboy's bed of straw, the gambler spread the cloak over it and waved Meers to be seated.

He then passed him the taper, and retraced his footsteps toward the dangling ladder.

All this while the silence had remained unbroken, but as Gaston Meers beheld the gamester leaving, he turned to him and said:

"You will not be long?"

Harry Chester shook his head.

"No," he said, "I am going to bring Butts his breakfast. You may talk as plainly as you like; no living soul will hear you."

Then he seized the ladder, ran briskly up it, and disappeared through the trap overhead.

Butts and his strange visitor were alone.

It was then a wild, mad plan rushed into the boy's brain, and his heart redoubled its rapid flattering.

"Your name is Butts, isn't it?" demanded Meers, speaking in a kindly tone, that might have reassured the lad, had he not witnessed the compact in the mud-larks' dining-room.

"Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't," he said. "What's that to you?"

Gaston Meers' brow clouded heavily, and it was with great difficulty he kept his temper.

"You speak oodly," he said. "But come, my lad, I want you to answer a few questions. First of all, were you on the piers at two o'clock this morning?"

"Yes."

"Did you meet there a young fellow named Fred Temple?"

"Oho! his name was Temple, eh? I had forgotten that. Yes, I did meet him; he was going to drown himself, but I saved him."

Gaston Meers beat a tattoo with his foot, and gnawed his fingers savagely.

His first thought was to buy the boy's silence, therefore he began beating around the bush in the following manner:

"Could you swear to that, Butts?"

"Yes."

"When the Temple murder case comes up before the courts, I am going to have you retained as a witness for the

prosecution. You have little to do, but I will pay liberally for doing that little.

"You say you were with Fred Temple on the piers when the clock struck two. Was that so?"

Butts made no reply.

"Answer me!" vociferated Meers; "is that so?"

"Ye-es, sir, if you please it is."

"Now, then, what I wish you to do is this: When you are called up, I wish you to swear that you never saw Fred Temple before, and on the night of the murder, that you were miles away—uptown. Do this and I will give you five hundred dollars. Refuse, and I leave you here to die."

Butts turned ghastly pale, and he was silent for some moments, as though conning over Meers' plot in his mind, and unable to answer it pro or con.

"Why don't you speak?" cried Meers. "Which will you do? Take the five hundred dollars or lie here and die?"

Butts lifted his head and fastened his eyes on those of his tempter.

"Will I have to swear on the Bible?" he asked, his voice trembling with every word.

"Of course you will!" responded Gaston Meers, with a brutal laugh. "Come, which will you do?"

There was a moment's pause.

The little fellow set his teeth firmly, and replied without a tremor in his voice:

"I'll lie here and die!"

Plucking up the candle, Meers waved his hand in the direction of the ladder.

"Come!" he said to Chester, who had returned in the meantime, moving forward as he spoke.

The gambler did not reply, but moved after him like a dog following his master.

Meers made a motion, and Chester ran up the rope ladder and disappeared through the trap above.

Butts was aching to ask what they were going to do—how dispose of him; but he would not give Gaston Meers one atom of a chance to triumph over his decision, or to flatter himself for an instant he could subdue his spirit.

Meanwhile, Meers was waiting for the boy to put the question to him, and finding no inclination to do so on the part of Butts, unable to keep the truth in longer, or conceal the passion that was consuming him, blurted out hotly:

"Good-day, my pious young mud-lark."

"Good-day to you, murderous scoundrel!" replied Butts, boldly.

Gaston Meers seized the rungs of the ladder, and with another volley of oaths, ran up.

Reaching the top, he pulled the ladder up and bent down through the hole.

The light of the candle played over his face, and brought the newsboy, on his pallet of straw, out in bold relief against the deeper background.

"You have made your own bed—lie on it!" cried Meers.

"Just what I'm doing, boss. It's mighty uncomfortable, though, for the feathers are too long."

"You'll have pleasant company with the rats, and when they feast upon the remains of the meat beside you, remember that it is the last bit of food you will ever see.

"Hunger is a hard master and a strong persuader. When next I call, I fancy your answer will be different."

Then the trap banged down sharply, and Butts was alone with darkness and despair.

It was a hard task for the lad to keep his spirits up under such disadvantages, but Butts began to whistle to keep himself company and scare off the rats he heard already approaching.

He heard the pattering of their feet on the flagstones, felt them scamper over the straw, and drew back with a shiver of disgust.

"Shoo!" he cried, scraping together the fragments of the dishes and hurling them at them.

But they returned directly, and already Butts' mind began to waver.

"I won't give in!" he muttered, clenching his dirty hands. "They may beat me, starve me, anything, but I can't swear to a lie on the Bible; mother would have forbidden it while she was living, and dead, I'm going to respect her wishes if it brings me death!

"I won't swear away Fred Temple's life—I'll die first!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRANGE ALARM AND THE ESCAPE.

Next day we find Meers hurrying on his way to Chester's gambling house.

Upon reaching this place, he ran lightly up the steps, and picked his way to the apartment where he had left the gamester.

The door was open and the room empty.

Meers flung his hat and coat in the corner, and, as if well satisfied that all was progressing smoothly, stepped out into the corridor and passed along towards the rear of the building.

He had not gone far when he noticed that the trap was open, and through this a light shone from the vaults below.

Meers stopped and whistled softly.

The signal was answered in the same way from the vaults, and presently the voice of Chester was heard inquiring:

"All right?"

"O. K."

"Come down, I'm working on the kid."

Meers passed forward and descended the ladder of ropes.

On the floor lay the senseless body of Butts, while the gambler, with a sponge in his hand, knelt over the senseless mass.

"What are you up to?" cried Meers, coming briskly towards him.

"Chloroform. I've fixed it with Dixie."

"What! the skipper?"

"Yes; the boy'll be aboard at midnight, and then—well, you understand—he'll fall overboard in a squall and nobody be blamed for it."

Meers' lips moved in an approving smile.

"Good!" he said, "but why drug the boy while it is yet day?"

"He is to be removed to my own apartment, that I may more easily dispose of him when the proper time arrives; and to take him there in full possession of his senses would

only be to acquaint those in the gambling-room with his presence."

"There, hold the light while I swing him over my shoulder and carry him up the ladder. That's good; now follow."

And with the lifeless child in his arms the brawny gambler passed up through the trap and hurried to his own apartment.

When consciousness returned to Butts, the newsboy, he was lying in a strange room, bound hand and foot, and gagged securely.

It was quite dark, and the blackness seemed to grow as the night dragged by; but, awed by the change in his situation, the poor little fellow could not sleep a wink.

"Oh, what are they going to do with me?" he thought, as he looked around in vain to determine his whereabouts.

But there seemed to be no answer to the question, so he grew sick of asking it.

In a very few minutes his quick ear caught the sound of a gentle footfall, and he held his breath in an agony of suspense.

A hand fumbled the lock, the door swung inward, and in the dim, uncertain light, Butts saw three men pass over the threshold; then the door was closed again, and the darkness hid their forms, although he could catch the sound of their voices and recognized Gaston Meers and Harry Chester.

The third was a stranger.

Butts strained his eyes and ears to catch something that should make this man known to him, but the fellow kept a sullen silence and slunk back in the deepest gloom.

Presently Chester came toward the boy, sank on his knee beside him, a low, gurgling, liquid sound was heard, and then a faint, sickly odor pervaded the atmosphere.

Butts felt a cold, wet substance fall over his mouth and nostrils, and then followed all the horrors of suffocation.

The room spun around; lights danced before his eyes; he fancied he felt fingers at his throat, and just as he drifted off into insensibility he heard echo through the house the single word:

"Halt!"

Rescue was at hand, but the rescuers came too late. Butts was senseless in the hands of his foes.

As Gaston Meers caught the sound of that word, he sprang back with a howl of rage, and cried:

"Maledictions! 'tis that meddling fool, Perry, at the head of a posse of police. Who gave the alarm, and directed him to this place? We are lost!"

Already the sound of footsteps could be heard coming through the gambling saloon, but springing up, Chester lifted Butts in his arms, and cried:

"Not yet, they have tracked the lion to his lair, but they must kill the fox first. Come! This way, follow me!"

And so saying, he darted out of the room and fled up the stairs, followed by Meers and the stranger.

As they reached the upper landing, they heard Perry exclaim:

"Have no fear, gentlemen, we only wish to search the house."

"Do you?" hissed Chester, setting his teeth together. "Search all you please, my smart shaver, but if you find the kid you are looking for, I'll be strung up for a fool, that's all!"

The footsteps of the officers could be heard ascending the stairs, and silently beckoning his companions on, the gamester fled up the next flight with his senseless burden.

"They are upon us—fly!" cried Gaston Meers, as the officers drew nearer.

Dashing towards a door at the rear of the building, Chester fled through it, followed by Meers and the stranger, who bolted it upon the inside.

"What are we to do, Harry?" gasped Gaston. "To be seen here will ruin me."

The gambler laid Butts upon the floor, and darting to a window, flung it up and pointed out into the darkness.

"Dixie!" he whispered.

"Ay—ay," from the stranger, who spoke now for the first time.

"Pick up the kid and descend by the fire-escape."

"That's me every time!" bluffly responded Dixie, as he lifted Butts and stepped out of the window.

Here he paused and looked back into the room as if expecting something.

The gambler drew a roll of bills from his pocket, thrust them into the man's hand, and whispered:

"Drop him over at sea!"

"Ay—ay, hearty!" and then Captain Dixie had disappeared.

"Now you!" cried Chester, turning and facing Meers, who, white as a sheet, was listening to the rapid approach of the police.

"Must I escape that way?" he cried.

"There is none other—go!"

A single bound placed the desperate young man at the window, and a moment after his form was swallowed up in the darkness.

With the rapidity of lightning, Harry Chester pulled down the sash, slid back the bolt, and dropping into a chair, closed his eyes.

Not an instant too soon, for scarcely had his eyelids fallen ere Sam Perry pushed open the door and led the police into the room.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" cried the gambler, springing to his feet and rubbing his eyes as though awakened from a sleep.

In a very few moments Sam Perry acquainted him with the fact that he had followed Meers to this place. Chester assisted them in every way to thoroughly search the premises, all the while assuring them that he only knew Meers by sight, and, moreover, was certain that he had not entered the house that night.

"But I saw him come in," reiterated Perry.

"Then it must have been alone to the saloon below, where I have not been since morning."

Thorough search proved of no avail—neither Butts nor Gaston could be found—and with a heavy heart, for he had grown to like Fred and had become a thorough believer in his innocence, Sam Perry left the house.

"It has all been useless," he muttered, "but may I never eat another meal if I don't find out the truth of this affair, even if I travel to the world's end to do so. Poor Fred! How hard he will take the news. Poor—poor boy!"

And so the tender-hearted officer passed on, while up in his chamber Harry Chester laughed in his sleeve at the trick he had played him, and never once thought of Fred Temple's danger.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

A month dragged wearily by, during which time the police were untiring in their search for Butts, the newsboy, or any other proof upon which to build an alibi for Fred Temple, but all efforts were of no avail, and as each day brought the trial nearer, the poor prisoner's heart sank with apprehension.

Life had never looked so sweet before, and he clung to it as a spider to its thread of film, spinning out fresh strands as the winds of destiny sundered the old.

On the afternoon preceding the morning of the trial, Dr. Fisher visited him in his cell and strove to cheer him up to meet fate boldly, and defy despair with a strong exhibition of hope and fortitude.

"Nil desperandum, Fred," he said, as he shook his hand and passed out of the cell, but young Temple shook his head sadly and turned away.

"It is all very kind of you," he replied, "but I am lost by my poor father's fatal mistake. I told him he had ruined me; for fate has taken the cards in her own hands and played a game it is beyond the power of man to euchre."

And so indeed it seemed.

The sun rose gloriously the next morning as though to give poor Fred hope; but he was beyond that now, and only awaited the end with a calmness that forced the conviction of a hardened nature to the mindless boors that crowded the court-room to suffocation.

Fred's answer to the court was:

"I am innocent!"

But the court demanded more than his words for proof, and when the jury went out, Fred Temple read his fate in their white, set faces.

They were impaneled but a short time, and when they returned all were on the quivive.

Dr. Fisher stepped to Fred's side and whispered:

"Be silent. Walter is here."

A dead, white pallor overspread the face of Fred, and he gasped:

"Get him away! The law demands his life, and will have it if he's recognized. How came he in America?"

"Hush! he is disguised, and is determined to save your life at the risk, even the loss of his own!"

Fred was about to reply to the strange words, but the voice of the judge as he addressed the jury quelled the cry upon his lips.

He heard all as in a dream—the address, the solemn tones of the foreman:

"Guilty!"

"I knew it!" he gasped, as he arose in answer to the judge's demand, and listened to the sentence that gave him to the hangman at ten o'clock upon the morning of August 9, 18—.

"No—no—no!" he cried.

And when he was led back to the cell, he went there as a condemned felon.

Towards evening, Dr. Fisher and a stranger, muffled to the teeth, entered the cell to see the prisoner.

In five minutes he emerged again with the muffled man lying senseless in his arms.

"What is the matter?" cried the jailer, running to his assistance, while the condemned prisoner, white as ashes, peered through the bars upon the strange group.

"My friend has fainted," the doctor replied. "He was warmly attached to Fred Temple, and his terribly unjust fate has stricken him senseless. Quick! help me to get him to my carriage!"

The jailer raised the feet of the senseless man and helped Dr. Fisher to bear him up the gloomy passage.

"Good-by, old friend. Be kind to Walter when I am gone," murmured the prisoner, pressing his white face closer against the cruel bars that hemmed him in.

Dr. Fisher, no less pale than he, turned and faced him.

"I will, Fred," he muttered, choking back his sobs. "You have acted nobly."

Strange words, those, to come from the lips of this pompous old man, and before the echo had died out into silence, the outer door slammed, and he and his insensible burden were gone.

From that day to the one set for the execution, Dr. Fisher sent flowers and fruits to the cell in the Tombs, but he never visited it again himself!

CHAPTER IX.

ABOARD THE "WIZARD OF THE WAVES."

Return we now to Butts, the newsboy.

When consciousness once more asserted its sway, the poor little fellow found himself a prisoner in a dark and dismal apartment.

He realized a rocking, heaving sensation, and several casks with which he was surrounded rolled by him with the strange movement.

"Crickey! where am I?" he asked, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "It's as dark as mammy's garret at night, and laws! how bad my stomach feels! I'm sure I've swallowed something, and it's moving around. Ugh!"

He struggled to his feet, and by great agility succeeded in keeping his balance.

"Jemima!" he gasped, "how bad I do feel! I wonder what's the matter?"

He took a step forward, but came to a sudden halt.

A rope, fastened around his waist, was attached to an iron staple in the floor.

"Jingo! I'm a prisoner. Oh, I remember now. The dark room at Chester's—the gambler—Gaston Meers—the stranger and the drug! This terrible rocking, too! It all flashes over my mind. They have abducted me; I am out at sea!"

Hardly had the words escaped his lips ere light streamed fully down, and looking up he saw that the hatch was lifted and a sailor was descending into the hold where he was imprisoned.

"Halloo, younker! Are you awake?"

"Yes," said Butts, somewhat reassured by the cheery, good-natured tone in which the words were spoken. "Am I out at sea?"

"Well, I reckon you are."

"How long have I been here?"

"Since last night. It's morning now. Captain Dixie sent me down to see if you felt peckish. Do you?"

"Yes. I am hungry. But tell me first, why I am here, and how long I am likely to stay."

The sailor turned his quid, hitched his trousers somewhat after the exaggerated style of some seamen, and replied:

"Can't 'zactly tell you that, sonny, but I'm afraid it's fur no good. Dixie he's a scorcher, and I do fancy some one's paid him to bring you aboard the Wizard."

"Aboard what?" asked Butts, pricking up his ears.

"This vessel. We call her the Wizard fur short, but her full name is The Wizard of the Waves. As to how long you are likely to stay, you may guess that when I tell you we're out on a whaling trip to the South Pacific.

"But see here; Dixie is crosser'n that," laying his two forefingers in the shape of the letter X, "and if we're going to talk, it must be under cover.

"I'll just slip on deck, and get yer peck, and we can talk while you're eating it. I like you, younker, and dash my bowsprit if they're going ter hurt yer while Ben Blunt can swing an arm or toss a belaying pin!"

Then the blunt old seaman (how aptly named) disappeared through the trap, and Butts was left alone in the dark hold.

But not for long; Ben Blunt soon returned, and the friendship which sprang up between the rough, burly man, and the small, defenseless child of the streets ripened with every hour.

When they had been out about six weeks, Butts was startled, not to say overjoyed, to receive word by Ben that Captain Dixie demanded his presence on deck.

The little fellow scrambled up the steps at all speed, and gazed with surprise and delight at the broad, illimitable expanse of ocean that stretched away in a glittering sheet upon all sides, till it met the dull gray streak where wave and sky seemed to blend.

About a quarter of a mile leeward a fountain of water suddenly shot up above the surface, and then disappeared.

Butts gazed at this with a mingled look of wonder and delight on his dirty face, but he was as ignorant of the fact of its being caused by a whale spouting, as the babe at its mother's breast.

Captain Dixie was standing on the after deck surrounded by his crew, and while Butts himself felt joyous at his release, and the sight of the sky once more, he had not yet noticed that the face of Ben Blunt bore a pained, troubled expression.

"What is the matter, my friend?" he asked; but Ben made no reply as he led him toward the captain.

Dixie's face lit up with an ugly smile, and he beckoned the boy to him.

"See here, lad," he said, assuming a gentleness of tone that his savage look belied, "you know you are aboard the Wizard. Now the point is, how will you pay your board?"

Butts looked puzzled, and rubbed his big blue eyes.

"I—I don't know what you mean, sir," he said.

"Why, I mean shall we drop you at some foreign port, or will you work your way as a common whaleman?"

"Oh, I'll work, sir!" cried Butts, a frightened look creeping into his eyes. "Please don't drop me at any port. I must get home, or an innocent man will lose his life. Let me work—anything, so that I get back in time to save Fred Temple!"

"Silence!" thundered Captain Dixie, and Butts knew that he had said something that should have been kept silent.

Coming forward, Dixie laid his hand upon the shoulder of the abducted lad.

"You have chosen well, my son," he said, "and you shall receive your first lesson now. Do you see that water?" he continued, pointing toward the whale-spout, which by this time was not more than fifty feet distant.

Butts, too terrified to speak lest he should make another blunder, nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Do you know what it is?"

"No, sir."

"It is a large fish. Now do you think you are brave enough to go in a small boat and harpoon him?"

"Will he hurt me, sir?"

"No. The moment the harpoon strikes him he will die," lied Captain Dixie, waving one of the men to lower a boat.

This was speedily done; but creeping forward unseen, Ben Blunt slid down the rope, and hid himself beneath the canvas.

"Can you do this?" re-demanded Captain Dixie.

"Yes," replied Butts; "if it will insure my safe return to New York.

"It will teach you to be a whaler that you may work out your passage," said Dixie. "Will you do it?"

"Yes," replied Butts very firmly, never knowing what a turning point in his existence that trifling word was doomed to be.

Captain Dixie chuckled as he realized that his dastardly plan was not likely to miscarry.

As he led Butts forward, he instructed him how to use the harpoon, and then all was in readiness for the start.

"Do you row, boy?"

"Yes, sir; I learned to do that around the East river docks."

"Good! now then, off with you."

Butts seized the rope, and lowered himself to the little boat, across whose stern was painted the words—as on the larger vessel:

"THE WIZARD OF THE WAVES."

He cast himself loose, seized the oars and pulled lustily towards the spouting whale.

The crew of the Wizard, no less brutal than their captain, crowded to the bulwarks, and watched how innocently and proudly the poor little fellow went to meet his bitter doom.

At length the boat was within six feet of the whale, and

quietly shipping the oars, Butts seizes the heavy harpoon and poises it in mid-air.

A moment's breathless silence, then the voice of Captain Dixie rings forth:

"Now!"

The harpoon whizzes through the air like a streak of fire, and sinks into the whale's shoulder.

A quick, sharp jerk, Butts is flung backward among the seats, while the hoarse laughter of the seamen rings in his ears.

The lad is conscious of the air fanning his face at a terrific rate as he rises, and a single look blanches his cheek with horror.

The harpoon stuck in; the mighty whale dragged the boat after it while tearing away at lightning speed. The huge monster was bearing the boy into mid-ocean and leaving the vessel far—far behind.

He saw it all now—the terrible trick they had played him—and fell back moaning.

"Homeless, friendless, away on this mighty waste, like the vessel I have left. I am indeed, if I live without food, a wizard of the waves!"

CHAPTER X.

AUGUST THE TWELFTH, AT SIX P. M.

On the afternoon of August the twelfth, Gaston Meers quitted Chester's gambling den, and, hailing a hack, was driven at all speed to the mansion upon Fifth avenue, of which he was now the proprietor, Horatio Temple's last heir being dead, and Meers the only living relative.

Since the execution he had become a different man, and the lips that his best friend had never before seen even quiver with merriment, were now perpetually framed with a triumphant leer.

His eyes flashed brightly as he ran up the steps of the house that was now his, and one near enough to have caught the muttered words that fell from his lips might have framed them into:

"The shadow is lifted from my path forever; now I am a made man!"

During his brief reign as master the servants had realized a terrible change in the state of household affairs, and the moment his footfall sounded upon the stair the house became silent as death.

Passing into the library, which by the way was always kept closed and darkened, he drew down the drop-light, applied a match to the burner, and then rang the bell.

Almost instantly his summons was answered by his valet; for Mr. Gaston Meers, now that he had become a man of millions, had effected such French drolleries, and dropping back in his chair he asked, in a curt, almost abusive tone:

"Who has been here to see me to-day?"

"Only one person, sir," replied the valet.

"Which was it, man or woman? Don't stand there bowing and scraping like an Italian dancing master; answer me!"

The man drew back half frightened, and replied, quickly:

"A woman, sir."

"Where's her card?"

"She gave me none; in fact, I feel certain she would not have understood me had I requested her to leave it."

"What are you driving at?" snapped Meers. "Do you mean to say it was a beggar?"

"Indeed, she looked very much like it, sir. She was clad in rags, and I should have driven her from the door only she said she was a friend of yours and muttered something about seeing you to-night or making your neck suffer."

Gaston Meers' face grew white as ashes, and the hand he had laid upon the bell clenched convulsively.

"Did she leave no name?" he asked.

"None, sir. She merely said, 'tell Gaston Meers that I will see him at six o'clock to-night, or I'll send him a rope and a black cap.'"

Meers leaped to his feet with a howl and rushed the man towards the door.

"Go!" he foamed. "How dare you bring me such messages? I will not see the woman!"

The valet slunk from the room like a whipped cur, but the door had scarcely closed upon him ere Gaston Meers sank back into the chair he had just left and groaned.

"What mockery is this? What woman lives who can read the blotted page in the book of my life and dares thus to threaten me? Ah! my brain whirls at the thought. Just when my path was brightest, a cloud obscures the sun, but all hades itself shall not drag me down from the eminence to which I have climbed, until the shifty adventurer has become the man of millions, and the criminal is lost in the robes of the banker's heir.

"No, no, no! I cannot, will not give way to fear, like a child. I can be myself before others; I will not be the slave of fancy when alone.

"But this woman—bah! brandy, or my courage will fail me, and the phantoms of a diseased brain drive me from the brink of despair into the abyss of madness and existing hades!"

He plucked a decanter from the side-board and drained glass after glass, till the brain he feared would fail him deserted him altogether, and he fell back in his chair in a drunken sleep.

The afternoon wore on; the daylight dragged out into the dark: the clock upon the mantel struck six—he sprang to his feet, once more fully awake to the rude mockeries of life, a prey to the mental torture of a criminal.

Hardly had he risen ere the dull, heavy clang of the bell told him that his strange visitor had arrived, and was upon time.

The old terror took possession of him, and he dropped back into his seat.

He heard the door open, caught the sound of sharp words, then footsteps hurried along the hallway, and a hand rapped upon the door.

"Come in," he scarcely more than muttered.

The door swung inward, and the valet, who had presumed to open the door, entered gently.

"The strange woman has returned, sir."

"Send her away!"

"If you please, sir, she won't go. She says she will see you, and sent this."

He tossed a dirty slip of paper upon the table before his master as he spoke.

Gaston Meers picked it up, and by the aid of the drop-light, read these words, scrawled in lead pencil across the dirty surface:

"P'raps there's sum won As noes moar about the Murder of Horasho tempul than mister gaston Meers wud kare to hev yer tel. let Me se You at wonse."

For a moment a blinding mist swam before his eyes, then he looked up, and said faintly:

"The poor creature is in great distress and needs help. You may send her in."

The valet merely bowed and left the room.

The moment the door closed upon him, Meers buried his face in his hands and lowered his head to the table.

He heard the door open and close, he heard footsteps by his side, but he never lifted his face to meet that of the unknown visitor.

Five minutes passed in this sullen silence, then the newcomer coughed lightly to show that she was eager to open the conversation.

Gaston Meers summoned up all his courage and raised his head.

Two pairs of eyes met with a flash, then Meers recoiled with a muffled shriek, and cried:

"Mother Croaker—you!"

"Me, always, honey!" she cried, with a fiendish leer.

He moved uneasily in his chair as though he was sitting upon needles.

"How did you know my name?" he asked, "and what brought you here?"

"T for tellin's," chuckled Mother Croaker, putting one finger on the side of her nose. "It's enough I know yer; don't ax too many questions or you may hear too many lies. You paid me three thousand dollars to give yer Butts so yer could hang yer cousin, now I wants one hundred thousand more or I'll give you an order on the Tombs, payable on sight."

Gaston Meers sprang up with a howl.

"You know too much!" he cried, diving down into his pocket and presenting a revolver at the woman's head.

To his surprise, however, Mother Croaker did not budge an inch or show the slightest sign of fear.

"Why don't you fire?" she chuckled.

"Are you turned coward or fool, and do you think I would place myself in your power? Shoot me, kill me—do what you like, but those who know I came here on a dangerous mission would place the halter around your neck for a double crime.

"Honey, old Mother Croaker isn't a fool if you are. I've written all I know about the great Temple murder, all about the missing newsboy, and placed the sealed package in the hands of friends, instructing them to open it and give the contents to the police in case I fail to appear at twelve o'clock to-night.

"Learn this from me, that when the lion's skin gets short, cover yourself with the fox's. There, put up your little barker and talk sensible. I want one hundred thousand dollars to keep my mouth shut, and I'm going to get it!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAVERN OF DELIGHT.

As he saw the vessel fading away in the distance, Butts' heart sank with fear.

"Oh, I am lost!" he cried, fastening his eyes upon the whale, which, although wounded to the death, still tore on at lightning speed, the blood-stained foam trailing away in their wake like a writhing serpent.

"Help me, Heaven!" shrieked the boy, standing up and wringing his hands. "Help me—I am friendless!"

"Not by a darn sight!" broke in a voice, and as Butts wheeled sharply around, startled by the cry, Ben Blunt flung off the sail-cloth and confronted him.

Butts sprang toward him with a shriek of delight.

"Ben!" he cried, "is it really you?"

"Well, I done think it be any one else!" returned the seaman, taking the boy by the hand and looking down into his fair, girlish face.

"We're afloat with a vengeance, young 'un, and if the whale, there, don't make a red-hot dive for the bottom, why, we're all right. I've got a few biscuits and a flask of brandy in my pocket, and I don't think we'll starve spite o' old Dixie and his crew of hell babbies, do you, younker?"

"I—I'm sure I hope not, sir!" faltered Butts. "But why not cut the rope and let the whale free? See, the poor creature is fast dying already."

"All the more use for keepin' her. If the worst comes to the worst we can live on the flesh, and again, if we should happen to land on some island hereabouts, why the oil would be worth a fortune to us. I allers carry my flint and steel, and a bit o' light's a big comfort on a dark night in a strange place."

Butts sat down on a seat beside Ben and plied him with questions.

"You spoke of land just now, Ben," he said. "Do you really think there is any hereabouts?"

The old tar shook his head sagely and replied:

"Well, you see, you can't mostly allers sometimes tell. This 'ere's clear water, an' there oughten't to be no islands accordin' to the charts, but you can't trust 'em. There's nothin' in this hull world can beat a chart fur lyin'.

"Tell you what it is, Butts, I shouldn't be one bit surprised if a big volcano was to bust right up afore us and leave an island as big as the hull United States. There's strange things in natur' and it's no use lobbling out yer tongue and hemmin' and ha'in', and lookin' wise an' sayin' it's this an' that and t'other, when yer don't know nothin' about it.

"Wise men nowadays say more'n their prayers, an' they don't say them any too of'en, an' I guess when yer comes right down to the truth of what they're gettin' at, they knows about as much of one as t'other. Them's my sentiments, Butts. I ain't no philosopher, but I'm willin' to do more than those wise-heads are, an' that's ter say, I don't know nothin' of the ways of Heaven, and I kinder think I'm a bit of a fool in the bargain!"

Butts scarcely knew how to take the old tar's odd reasoning, and contented himself with nodding his head in a wise sort of way that seemed to please Ben.

Meanwhile, the vessel had completely faded from sight, and the slow movements of the whale acquainted them with the fact that his life was fast ebbing away.

Suddenly, however, he commenced lashing his tail from side to side and almost upset the boat with his violent efforts to get away.

"Look—look!" cried Butts, pointing his finger to where a number of dark fins cleft the waves around the whale. "Look, Ben, those fishes are attacking him!"

The old tar sprang to his feet.

"It's all up with him!" he cried, "the 'killers' are after him."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, simply that this species of whale, called the killer, lives only upon the tongue of the others? Hundreds of them attack a fish, tear his tongue from his mouth, and then bear it to the bottom of the sea for food."

"But surely the whale can keep his mouth shut and defy them?"

"Can he?" answered Ben. "Well, just look there then!"

This time a number of "killers" had surrounded the whale and pressed upon its spout-hole, thus excluding the air, and as the whale, injured as it was, could not exist without rising above the surface to breathe every minute, the effect was to cause him to open his mouth with a sudden gasp, then the "killers" darted in, tore out his tongue, and fled in a body to the bottom of the ocean to dispute their prize one with the other.

The whale fairly tore through the water for a few rods, then he suddenly stopped, bellowed loudly, quivered, and rolled over on his side.

"Dead as a mackerel!" cried Ben, at this. "If it was a mother-in-law whale, I should say it broke its heart at the loss of its tongue!"

They did not cut the whale loose and let it drift away, for Ben did not know to what use it might yet be put.

Night came on.

They partook sparingly of the brandy and biscuits, and awaited the time ordained by Heaven for their salvation.

Another day, and still another dragged on into the irreclaimable past, and once again the night fell.

About ten o'clock a still breeze sprang up; the waves leaped up on either side of them, and poor little Butts almost died of fear.

Soon the rain descended in a perfect deluge, and in a very few moments they were drenched to the skin.

In the dense gloom it was impossible to tell in which direction they were drifting, and they could only cling on to the boat, and wince at the hard bumps they received as they were hurled hither and thither at the mercy of the storm.

"Good laws!" suddenly ejaculated Ben, as they were sent spinning quickly forward at an increased rate.

"Wh—what's the matter?" gasped Butts, totally unable in his fright to draw a single steady breath.

"Didn't I tell you charts lied? There! Do you hear that? Them's breakers! We're off a reef!"

"Oh, we will be drowned!" shrieked Butts. "Please, Ben, let me——"

The sentence was never finished.

They were hurled suddenly upward by the force of the waves, and then, with a fearful crush that sent the old tar sprawling on his face, they struck solid ground, and remained lodged firmly, boat and all, above the surface of the sea.

All was darkness and gloom.

They could hear the growling of angry thunder, the spray from the waves that beat below them dashed in their faces, but they could laugh at the battle and defy them.

Providence had stretched forth a timely hand and plucked them from a watery grave.

"Where are we, Ben?" cried Butts, when he could draw his breath.

"Sh-h-h!" whispered the old tar. "Don't breathe a word—don't move! We're tossed up on a reef and lodged in the rocks, and it wouldn't take more than a breath to chuck us back. Lie down and sleep, Butts, for the Lord only knows what sort of a spot we've got into."

"Whoop! Jumpin' Jehosophat! Look, Butts—wake up! By the Eternal, I want to be an angel right off!"

Butts arose up and rubbed his eyes, then he started back and a low cry of delight broke from his lips.

They were in a large cavern whose dome was one great, glittering mass of stalactites.

Through a broad rent in this dome the full, rich sunlight of heaven poured in and flashed over the gleaming, whitish, diamond-like pendants till they resembled arrows of gold and darts of flame.

Creeping to the mouth of the cavern, Butts found to his surprise that the tide receding had left them lodged in a huge fissure in a long chain of rocks that shut off a beautiful and luxuriant island a few feet to the west.

Below them laid the ocean; the great whale, still fastened to the rope, floated on its bosom, and over the whole placid scene the mellow gleam of the morning sun spread a film of amber and a halo of romance that made Butts think of tales he had heard of the fairyland and its golden seas.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

On the afternoon that Mother Croaker visited Gaston Meers a stranger scene was taking place at the house of Dr. Fisher, on Lexington avenue.

The doctor was sitting alone in his library when a gentle tap on the door aroused him from the book he was reading, and looking up he called, in a gentle, kindly voice, that at home took the place of his pompous style when abroad:

"Come in."

The door swung inward, and a liveried servant came towards him.

"Well, Andrews?" queried the doctor, throwing aside his books, and looking the servant squarely in the face.

"If you please, sir, Mr. Naunton is asking for you."

"You have not allowed him to leave his room?" questioned Dr. Fisher, a shade of anxiety crossing his face.

"Oh, no, sir; we followed your directions; administered the drug in his coffee, and shaved him while he slept."

"How does he look now, Andrews?"

"His own mother wouldn't know him, sir. Not a hair

on his face or head. He was a handsome fellow before, but he's a perfect fright now, sir."

The doctor's lips moved with an approving smile, and he rose from his seat.

"You have acted well, Andrews," he said, moving towards the door.

"You may remain here within sound of my voice, and should I need you I will call."

The servant bowed to his master's orders, and pushing open the door, Dr. Fisher passed out into the hall.

Turning up a broad flight of carpeted stairs, he ascended to the second landing, and taking a key from his pocket, unlocked a door and passed into a richly-furnished room.

A man sprang up from his seat by the window, and ran eagerly towards him.

"Doctor," he cried, joyously, you have come! I was dying to see you."

He seized the physician's hand and shook it warmly.

Dr. Fisher smiled pleasantly and drew him toward the sofa.

"Come, let us sit," he said; "I wish to talk with you, Arthur."

The young man looked into his eyes with a puzzled expression as he dropped down upon the sofa.

"What name did you call me?" he asked.

"Arthur," was the reply. "Is not that your name?"

"You are joking, doctor. Of course not. You have known me from my birth, and should not make such a mistake. Apropos, my friend, your servants, too, call me by a strange name. What is it?"

"Naunton."

"You surprise me. You know of this and permit it. That is not my name. It is——"

The doctor laid his hand over the young man's mouth, cutting short his speech, and added:

"Your name is Arthur Naunton as surely as this is the twelfth of August!"

Young Naunton—for want of a better, we will call him by that name, too—leaped to his feet white as ashes.

"The twelfth of August!" he fairly shrieked. "Then Fred Temple is——"

"Executed!" finished the doctor.

Naunton dropped back upon the sofa with a gasp of horror.

"Great heaven!" he groaned; "then they have hung an innocent man!"

"No," replied the doctor, stoutly; "they have hung a guilty one."

He lowered his lips to the young man's ear and whispered to him.

An odd, despairing, pallid look crept over Naunton's face, and his chin dropped upon his breast.

"And he has suffered the highest penalty of the law after all," he groaned, as the doctor concluded. "Oh, sir, his death was so noble that surely Heaven will forgive his crime!"

"Yes, Arthur, I think—nay, am certain so. It has been, indeed, a bitter trial, but it is left for you to ferret out the truth. You leave this house to-night upon your search."

"But consider, my friend, I will be seen and recognized."

"You think so? Look here."

The doctor lifted a hand-mirror as he spoke, and held it up before him.

"Do you think you will be recognized?" he asked, with a smile.

Arthur Naunton shook his head.

"No," he said. "On that score I am safe. But go on. What am I to do? You are my guardian now"—with an odd, sad smile—"direct me."

"Well, in the first place, my boy, you leave to-night as passenger—scientist—anything, but the only one on the Chrysalis, which is to make a whaling voyage to the South Pacific."

"But what use will this be?"

The doctor smiled.

"Simply to get you out of the way until the Temple affair blows over. Then you may return, make this your home, and begin this, your life search in the cause of justice."

"You are right," said Naunton, rising with a strange expression upon his colorless face. "I will go."

Dr. Fisher whispered a few words to him, wrung his hand and then left the room, locking the door upon the outside.

Descending the stairs, he found Andrews awaiting him in the library.

"Order the coach at eight, Andrews," he said, as he picked up his books once more and resumed his reading.

The servant bowed his way from the room and Dr. Fisher was left alone.

Ten minutes past eight o'clock.

The scene: the hallway of the doctor's house.

A gentle footfall presses the tufted stairs and the physician comes into view followed by a figure muffled like that which visited Fred Temple's cell in the Tombs just before the execution.

Behind them Andrews, with his arms full of bundles, plods along.

Swinging open the outer door, the doctor and his friend descend the steps, spring into a closed carriage that stands by the cart, and in five minutes after go rattling away down the paved avenues.

For three-quarters of an hour the horses are urged onward, then they come to a standstill among the docks.

"Pee—weep!"

The coachman has placed his fingers to his lips and given a shrill blast.

"Pee—weep!"

It is answered.

A moment's silence, then footsteps are heard and a couple of sailors come into view.

"Is it, Mr. Naunton?" asks one, acting as spokesman.

For reply the carriage door is pushed open and Arthur and the doctor step to the ground.

The sailor removes his hat politely, and then shoulders some of the bundles.

"Come on, sir," he says. "The Chrysalis lies out in the bay only waiting for you."

Arthur passes to the end of the pier, wrings the doctor's hand, and then descends to the boat that is to bear him aboard the whaler.

The oars dip in the water, the little craft shoots forward,

and then the first word passes between the two men—and it is the last:

"Good-by."

Two hours after.

Ten o'clock.

The sails of the Chrysalis gleam in the moonlight like ghostly robes, as she floats away in the distance.

The doctor's carriage goes flying homeward, and both men are apart—perhaps forever!

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER SIX WEEKS—THE STORM—THE WIZARD.

The angry clouds that all day have been drifting together have at last met in one jumbled, inky mass, directly overhead, while, as through a sieve, the rain pelts down angrily upon the vessel that tosses hither and thither upon the heaving Pacific—that mockery of a name when the storm king asserts his sway.

Night came on, and in the darkness and the gloom the Chrysalis—for it was indeed she—rolled and tossed from side to side, utterly at the mercy of the storm.

Her mainmast was gone, her tattered canvas and broken ropes snapped like whipcords in the stiff gale, while the seamen, all too frightened to speak, clung to the rigging and prayed as only men who stare death in the face can pray. It was not a polished formula; it was not that rhetorical classification of pompous syllables that too often goes for prayer—it was a rough, untutored flow of words, whose only boast could be their awful earnestness and blind entreaty.

On the after deck, his face whiter than the foam upon the billows, stood Arthur Naunton.

"Will we go down, captain?" he asked, turning to that worthy, who stood by his side.

"Heaven only knows, Mr. Naunton. Smaller vessels have weathered greater storms, and larger ones have foundered in lesser. It is Heaven that takes the helm now. See!"

The last word directed Arthur Naunton's attention to the bowsprit, which snapped like a pipe stem, fell over into the sea, but, still attached to the vessel by the cording, threatened to draw her down to destruction.

"All hands to cut away!" bellowed the captain, and in a very few minutes the Chrysalis righted and the broken mast was swept away in the darkness.

The storm now increased in violence and a wreck seemed inevitable.

"After all my dangers," moaned Arthur, as he strained his eyes towards the angry skies, "am I to be lost in this one, Heaven?"

"Port your helm!" he heard the captain shriek, and the wild tones told Arthur that something of awful import had occurred.

"Port—port! Breakers ahead!"

With a shriek of horror, Arthur Naunton sprang forward.

"Breakers ahead in mid-ocean!" he cried! "captain, you are mad!"

"Port your helm, port—port," was all the captain replied, but the answer came not—the man at the wheel had been swept overboard.

The next instant the Chrysalis plunged her nose into the billow, arose with a sudden leap, and dashed headlong upon the rocks.

With sudden born impulse, Arthur Naunton seized a rope and lashed himself to a grating.

The crew struggled to save the vessel, for it was a battle with death, but one giant wave arose from its heaving bed, washed fairly over the decks, and the next moment the sea was alive with men bobbing up and down like corks.

Out—out swept Arthur Naunton, the sea beating over him, and the jagged rocks battering and bruising his flesh, but the worst horror was yet to come.

Suddenly there broke above the awful din the wild, maddening howl of human voices, and just then a flash of lightning revealed to the poor fellow the rocky coast, lined with cannibals, leaping up and down in eager anticipation of a capture.

"Good heaven!" he cried, "is there no help? Must I die in this horrible manner?"

Another flash revealed the sea, fairly living with its freight of human souls.

He saw the bobbing heads, the stranded wreck, heard the shrieks of horror from the doomed wretches, then he beheld the cannibals in their bark canoes paddle through the frothy breakers in search of their prey.

A minute more—he is seen!

In vain the desperate man struggles to tear himself from the grating that he may fight for his life—his former terror had aided him to fasten the knots, and the effort is useless.

The shrieks of the man-eaters, as they paddle toward him, ring in his ears, and he gives himself up for lost.

At this period a friendly wave caught him upon its bosom, swept him out from among the larger rocks, and dashed away with him.

The cannibals set up a howl of rage, and plied their paddles vigorously.

Fate surely interfered in Arthur Naunton's behalf, for in sweeping past a small rock, the jagged edge cut the ropes, and he scrambled to his knees, freed from his bonds, then out he went once more into the ocean.

Thrice he circled around as he passed into a changeful current, then with a quick dash, the grating whirled past a frowning reef and drifted back at all speed toward the cannibals.

A groan escaped the poor fellow's lips as he realized the sudden turn affairs had taken, but, unarmed as he was, he prepared to sell his life dearly.

The dusky wretches in their buoyant canoes fairly hemmed him in, and by a flash of lightning he saw half a hundred keen lances directed at him.

Suddenly the whole scene is illumined by a bright light, and upon his startled senses breaks the words:

"Beware of the Wizard of the Waves!"

Then, upon the very bosom of the ocean, circled by flames that lap all around his body, the figure of a human being clad in skins goes sailing by.

A moment only—the flames go out—the frightened cannibals flee at all speed, and in the darkness and gloom, **Arthur Naunton is left alone!**

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEAT LITTLE PLOT.

We left Gaston Meers just as Mother Croaker had declared her intention to get the hundred thousand dollars she coveted, or failing in this, consign him to the scaffold.

Meers was completely beside himself with despair, but a brain so prolific as his in plotting, soon conceived a way out of the difficulty.

"You shall have your money," he said, rising to infer that the interview was at an end, but, although her face lit up with triumph, Mother Croaker did not stir.

"When?" she asked, gruffly.

"To-morrow night. You must not come here again; it would excite suspicion. Meet me—let me see—say at Pier 45, North river, at nine o'clock. That will do, won't it?"

"Yes," replied the crone, still not budging from her seat.

Meers moved away and fingered the bell-knob uneasily. A sudden pause of silence ensued.

"Well," said Meers, fidgeting about the ornaments on the table, "is not our interview at an end?"

"No," said Mother Croaker. "There are two things I must know. First, how did young Temple's guvner mistake you for him on the night of the murder?"

Meers turned pale; he knew she had the upper hand, and it was folly to evade the question.

"We are alike," he replied; "that you can plainly see. He gambled away his coat and jewels at Chester's. Harry sent them directly to me and I wore them. What is the second question?"

"Are you tryin' to trick me?"

"No," he answered, uneasily. "You will receive your money to-morrow night."

"Very well, then put it down in black and white."

Gaston Meers drew back with a gasp.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Simply what I want that agreement in black an' white, an' I don't leave this house, honey, till I get it. There, now, don't pucker up your face. Take your pen an' ink an' write."

With an oath, Meers resigned himself and wrote:

"This is to certify that I agree to pay Mrs. Croaker one hundred thousand dollars on the night of August 13, 18—.

"(Signed) GASTON L. MEERS."

"There," he said, tossing it to her.

Mother Croaker picked it up and read it carefully.

"It won't do, honey," she said, with a leer. "You'll have to write it over."

"What do you mean, woman?"

"Why, it don't stand as I wants it ter. It don't say nothin' about the murder, an' it must do that for me. You agrees to pay this money for my knowledge of the Temple murder, an' I wants the paper to say so!"

It was a desperate situation, and Meers was completely conquered.

He wrote the paper as she wished and then passed it to her.

She read it carefully, pushed it in her bosom, and arose to leave.

"Remember," he said, as she passed out of the door, "Pier 45, to-morrow night at nine."

"I shan't forget it, honey," she chuckled, and then the door closed upon her.

"Nor I!" hissed Gaston Meers, falling back in his chair, "for it will be your last night on earth, Mother Croaker! Now for Chester's."

CHAPTER XV.

MOTHER CROAKER PROVES TOO MUCH FOR THE ENEMY'S PLOT.

Mother Croaker hurried away homeward at all speed after she left Gaston Meers, but there was an odd light in her eyes that might have disconcerted that worthy had he been permitted to see it, and which certainly proved that she was fully awake to his villainy, and was even now preparing herself to battle against it.

Mother Croaker's youthful boarders were somewhat startled that night to find the old crone not only in a pleasant frame of mind, but actually polite, and once or twice positively guilty of using words of endearment.

Still more astonished were they when, the following morning, they were allowed to eat as much as they wished without extra taxation upon their purses, and the crone was actually buried in oblivion.

Breakfast over, Mother Croaker donned her hat and shawl, put a few coins in her pocket, and sallied forth.

She bent her footsteps toward the North river.

It was just striking nine as she reached Pier 45.

As she passed along up the wharf several of the workmen accosted her, and it was evident that even here she was no stranger.

Reaching the end, she paused, placed her hands upon her hips, and cast her bleary eyes upon the gliding water.

Again that queer smile—the same that had been there the night previous when she left Gaston Meers' house—stole over her lips, and she muttered:

"Humph, you'd drop me over there, would you, honey? Yes, yes, a very neat little game, but you will find Mother Croaker'll prove too much for the enemy's plot, my gay young cock-sparrow! Too much, honey! Ha, ha, ha! Too much, indeed!"

For fully five minutes the old crone stood there looking at the water, then, with a suddenness that was part of her, she wheeled around and stalked back to the street.

"Halloo, mammy!" hailed a juvenile voice, pitched in a shrill treble. "Got yer best togs on. Where yer goin'?"

Mother Croaker turned sharply around and faced a ragged newsboy (one of her boarders) who was peddling his wares along the wharfs.

"Is that you, Pete? Where's Jerry Sleepers?"

"What, Jerry de oyster man?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he was just dere a few minnits ago. Guess yer'll fin' him up at 46—Sun, sir?" (to a passer-by).

Mother Croaker waited to hear no more, but moved on towards Pier 46 with increased speed.

Pete had directed her well, for almost the first person she encountered was Jerry Sleepers, a rough, uncouth-

looking fellow, but despite his gruff exterior, his heart was well enough as hearts in this world go.

"Halloo, ole gal! What yer doin'? Not comin' the beggin caper, are yer, wid all der soap yer makes offen dem 'ere kids? Come, I say, dat ain't right, 'case dere's dem as is pore, an' needs de money dey arks fur."

"No, Jerry, I ain't a beggin'. I'm above them things, I am. I only wants ter see yer on a matter of bizzyness, dat's all, honey," said the old woman, slyly taking the coins from her pocket and jingling them in her rough palm.

Jerry Sleepers cast his eyes upon her red face, and knew there was something coming, but he only said:

"Oh, that's all right. Go on den."

"Are you sure as how we won't be seen talkin' 'ere?"

"Well, just trot back er dis truck. Dere! Now blow yer whistle, old 'un."

"Jerry, them's five dollars' worth, them is; how yer like to win 'em."

Sleepers eyed the coins.

"How'd I like ter eat?" was the quaint reply. "But see 'ere, 'tain't none of this bizziness, is it? C-r-r-r-k!"

He drew his four fingers across his throat in a manner that implied cutting it.

Mother Croaker held up her hands in horror.

"Lor' a mussy, no!" she cried. "'Tain't in me to disgrace meself. There never was a Croaker 'anged, although many as 'as been 'anged 'as turned croakers!"

And the pair laughed at the old crone's vulgar wit.

"All right, then, spit it out."

"Well, then, a certain gentleman as I knows too much about for his own good is ter meet me at nine to-night on 45 ter pay me some money. Well, Mother Croaker keeps her eye peeled, and finds out dat de certain party means ter play pitch-an'-toss wid her—twig?"

"Well, I guess I do. Goin' ter dump de ole gal overboard, eh?"

"Yes; but de ole gal don't see it. So she gives you dis five dollars ter be under de pier wid yer rowboat, an' scoop 'er out when de certain party dumps 'er in."

"Oh—ho! dat's all, is it?" cried Jerry. "Hunkey doree! Tip us de shiners, old 'un; I'll be on hand."

"Sure?" queried Mother Croaker, as she emptied the coins into his palm.

"S'help me Christmas. May I never see de back of me neck if I don't!"

Evidently this was a solemn oath on Jerry Sleeper's part, for Mother Croaker shook his hand heartily and trudged on homeward, well pleased with her bargain.

She had, indeed, proven too much for the enemy.

Upon reaching her apartments, Mother Croaker set about getting the noonday meal for her boarders, and after this had been demolished, waited with feverish impatience the coming of night.

An old play records the fact that "Twelve o'clock is bound to come," and at length the hour for starting arrived.

The gravish pallor of the moon streamed down through the adjacent chimneys as the crone wended her way towards the docks, where she emerged at last and peered cautiously around for the enemy.

Gaston Meers had not yet arrived—the docks were deserted.

Mother Croaker hailed the dawning of this knowledge with delight, and running out to the end of the pier, bent over the stringpiece and glared down into the river.

"Hist, Jerry!"

"Ay, ay, old 'un."

"All right?"

"O. K., old gal; has the 'certain party' arrived yet?"

"No. Lay low. Mum's the word."

Then, well satisfied, she took up her position behind a pile of lumber and kept her eyes fastened upon the street.

She could hear the monotonous splashing of the water against the piles, she could see the glimmer of the moonlight upon the river, but her soul was eager for other things.

A dense cloud drifted forward and obscured the face of the moon.

The glimmer on the water was dimmed, but through the gray gloom the lights of the city streamed forth like spears of gold.

A dull, muffled sound attracted the woman's attention. She drew herself up and listened.

It was the echo of a bell striking the hour of meeting.

Nine o'clock!

The last, sonorous peal of the iron tongue had died away into a husky moan, and then another sound met her ears—footsteps!

She held her breath in suspense.

Was it some drunken brawler, some chance passerby, or was it the man she was waiting for?

They drew nearer.

She heard the change of echo as they passed from the stone flagging and trampled upon wood, and bending forward Mother Croaker peered above the pile of lumber with an eager, expectant gaze.

A moment her eyes swept up the dark pier, then she sank back into a deeper shadow with a little cry of delight.

It was Gaston Meers!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE UNDERGROUND RIVER—CREATING THE WIZARD.

We left Butts and Ben Blunt standing in the cavern into which the storm of the night previous had hurled them, awed and delighted at the wondrous sight.

"Bust my bowsprit and take a reef in the cabin winders," cried the old tar, "if this isn't the goldarndest most beautifulest place wot I ever seed. Why, look a'ere, Butts, at them pirsted things like silver spears a stickin' down inwards from the roof amidships. Swab my face with a bucket o' slush, but it's a reg'lar out-an'-out Cavern o' Delight!"

"And so we'll call it, Ben, for indeed it is!" chimed in Butts, stealing to the side of the honest old seaman.

After they had feasted their eyes upon the beauties of the spot they began to make a more thorough examination and seek for its usefulness, for, prompted by hungry stomachs, they were anxious to get ashore on the island beyond, in hopes of finding something palatable.

Their attention was attracted by a deep, wide fissure in the floor of the cavern, through which the sea flowed and formed a river that lost itself in the darkness beyond.

Naturally of an adventurous spirit, Butts proposed ex-

ploring this, and Ben, being nothing averse to the proposition, the matter was settled forthwith.

The harpooned whale was secured, by means of the rope, at the entrance of the cavern, and then pushed off the boat and sprang in.

Seizing the oars, Ben Blunt urged the little craft towards the aperture where the sea flowed through the rock, and in a few moments they were again inside the cavern.

There seemed to be very little current, therefore they were obliged to ply the oars to drive them on.

This was fortunate, for should any strange freak of nature lead the underground river on to an abrupt termination, a rapid inward flow of the water would utterly destroy every chance of their returning to the sea.

Soon the daylight was lost and they found themselves plying the oars in the deepest and most impenetrable darkness it had ever been their fortune to encounter; yet they did not flinch from their self-imposed task or show the least sign of fear.

After they had gone on about half a mile, the river suddenly curved off somewhat like the letter L, and they were overjoyed to find the darkness decrease, which plainly proved that they were again to encounter daylight.

Still in silence they worked on.

The light grew clearer; they could see trees beyond, and in a very few minutes they emerged from another cleft rock and lay floating on an inland sea.

Giant palms and slender, feathery lindens o'erarched the golden tide, and upon every side could be heard the melodious whistle of the birds mingled with the harsher jabber of monkeys that leaped from bough to bough, pelting them with fruit and blinking at them as though they were creatures new to their existence. This was the view they first took of it, but they were soon to learn differently.

Running the boat up upon the smooth, pebbly beach, they sprang out and began pelting the monkeys with stones; whereupon the knowing little creatures returned fire with cocoanuts and bread-fruit, upon which our friends made an excellent breakfast, quenching their thirst at a little rill that ran hard by.

They instantly agreed to make the cavern their home, and to journey here for food, since from that place they could command a better view of the sea, in their watch for a passing vessel.

Plucking up some large handfuls of the sun-dried grass, and loading the boat with bread-fruit and bananas, they returned by the underground river to the cavern of delight.

The grass made excellent beds, and the fruit they stored away for future use.

Three weeks passed during which time they trapped several goats with which the island abounded, and out of the skins fashioned clothes suitable to the spot, sewing them with threads from their old garments and needles made from blackthorns

They had already eaten several pieces of the whale, but it now began to grow dark, yet its body attracted a species of crab which they caught freely and found extremely palatable, boiling them in a large shell set over a grass fire raised from Ben Blunt's flint and steel, before mentioned.

On the Tuesday afternoon of the fourth week, they determined to return again to the inland sea to replenish their stores, and accordingly they entered the boat, passed up the underground river, and emerging once more, set about filling the craft with fruit.

They had partially accomplished this when a sudden shout startled them, and they turned around just in time to see a party of natives dash into sight, sweeping around a curve in their bark canoes.

The shout was immediately followed by a flight of lances that grazed their skin as they darted toward the boat.

Ben Blunt seized the oars and pulled like mad toward the entrance to the underground river, but, nothing daunted, the dusky man-eaters followed at all speed.

"Lord save us!" cried Ben, "they're a-goin' to foller us to the cavern."

Such, indeed, was the case, but luckily our friends had an advanced start and reached the objective point first. Adown the hollow of the underground river they could hear the echo of the plashing paddles, and pale with fear, Butts turned toward Ben.

"What shall we do?" he cried.

For a moment Ben Blunt was at a loss, then his ready wit came to the fore

"Quick!" he fairly shrieked, plucking up a handful of the dried grass, "we must frighten them. You're the lightest, Butts; spring upon the whale; I'll set fire to the oil in the sides and send you floating down the river!"

In another instant the thing was done, and drifting along on his flaming raft, Butts went slowly down the dark river, crying as he went:

"The Wizard of the Waves!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"ONLY ANOTHER RIVER MYSTERY."

The moment she recognized Gaston Meers in the newcomer, Mother Croaker's heart leaped up with delight.

"It's him—it's him!" she cried, "an' I'll show him wot's wot."

In dealing with him alone, the old crone had felt no alarm, but scarcely had Meers entered upon the pier ere another form appeared and joined his, and this second one the woman made out to be Harry Chester, whom Gaston had inveigled into helping him to bury the proofs of their crime.

Then it was that Mother Croaker congratulated herself upon her expediency, and felt extremely grateful for the ready wit that had suggested this easy method of tricking them. We say "them," for now she realized she had to battle against two, and with all her cunning she had never counted upon Gaston Meers seeking the aid of Harry Chester, but now that she knew it, it seemed the most natural thing in the world.

Upon reaching the end of the pier, Gaston Meers paused and looked around.

Emerging from her place of concealment, Mother Croaker shambled toward him.

"Good evenin' to yer, honey," she leered. "Brought company with yer, didn't yer? Well, it doesn't make no difference, 'cause he's as deep in the mire as you be, and if you hang, why—kerpop! up he goes with yer; ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Chester turned deadly pale.

"Silence!" he cried. "How dare you speak so loudly?"

Mother Croaker bowed and scraped to them in the most servile manner.

"Pardon, honey. Didn't mean no harm."

Here Meers broke in with:

"Cease this banter. The end is to come—why not now? Here is your money—I have brought a receipt."

He passed the money to Mother Croaker as he spoke, and producing a notebook, tore out a sheet upon which something had been written.

He gave the old woman a pencil and motioned her to a post that stood upon the edge of the string-piece.

The crone waddled over to this, laid the book upon it, and began to write.

The pencil scraped roughly over the paper, then the receipt was signed and Mother Croaker passed it to him.

"Now you and I are done," she said. "There's the receipt."

"Yes, done indeed!" cried Meers; "and there's the bottom!"

Quick as lightning he pushed her, and with a shrill scream she flung up her arms and toppled over into the river, where she sank with a dull, heavy splash.

Taking to their heels, the two men fled at all speed, while in the darkness Jerry Sleepers searched vainly for Mother Croaker's body. It did not come up to the surface!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITORS.

Passing hurriedly up to Broadway, Gaston Meers hailed a hack, Chester followed him in, and the pair were rattled away at all speed to the mansion on Fifth avenue.

Upon reaching his home, Meers sprang out, paid the driver and led the way into the house.

Harry Chester followed him into the library, but neither spoke a word.

Meers passed him a box of cigars, the twain sank into their seats and soon the air was filled with smoke.

The clock upon the mantel ticked off five minutes, then the gambler laid down his weed, looked his companion squarely in the face and said:

"By the Eternal, Gaston, your nerves are steel. But are you not afraid alone?"

A shiver traversed Meers' form, but he replied with a light laugh:

"Do you think me a child? Once a being stands in my way, he dies. I would crush him as easily and with less compunction than I do this fly!"

He brought his hand down upon the table with a heavy bang as he spoke, but the insect eluded the blow and flew away unharmed.

"And miss him as easily?" ventured Chester, following the fly with his eyes.

"Gaston, we are playing a dangerous game. Diamonds are trumps, but the stakes—the scaffold! What if fate had warded off the blow you struck Mother Croaker? What if she returns from the very jaws of death? With that order in her possession, it would be the signing of your death warrant!"

"But I tell you she will not return!" cried Meers. "To-morrow, perhaps, her body will be found, and you may read of it written down as another river mystery. I am no fool, I strike while the iron is hot, and you should know how well I do so."

"Peace! we have had enough of this. Come, we will sleep now, and to-morrow I will pay you what still is due of your share. Come!"

Harry Chester made no objection, and the twain left the library for their separate bed chambers.

On the upper landing, Meers shook his hand and then the door closed upon him.

Chester entered his apartments, disrobed and crept into bed.

As for Gaston Meers, sleep was no easy thing to woo.

Once alone in his chamber, all the old fancies came over him, and in his fear, he durst not light the gas.

The moon was shining brightly, and throwing up the window, he pushed back the shutters and allowed the full, mellow light to stream into the room.

The air stirred the waxy leaves of the ivy that clambered up from the garden to the windows above him, and even this gentle rustle was so full of ghostliness, that he hurriedly drew off his garments and sprang into bed.

Ten—eleven! he heard the clock in the hallway peal forth, then his eyelids drooped, his senses swam and he knew no more—he slept.

But it was a sleep worse than wakefulness.

Once he fancied he saw Mother Croaker, dripping with water, arise from the river and laugh at him.

Again a figure entered through the open window of his chamber.

He heard the ghostly footfalls tinkling upon the carpet; he saw the figure bend over him, felt its cold breath upon his cheek; then, with a violent start, the wretched man awoke.

He heard the clock again strike as he opened his eyes in consciousness, and counted the strokes mechanically as they broke upon the stillness.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve! Twelve o'clock! Midnight!" he muttered.

"Midnight!" a voice repeated, in a deep whisper, near his head.

The wretched man trembled from foot to crown, but, chained by a horrible fascination, he dared not move.

"It is only fancy," he muttered, "or the wind sighing through the ivy leaves. I am fearful of nothing."

At that moment the moon swept from behind a bank of clouds; the light streamed fully through the open window, and across the wall before him was outlined a human shadow.

Someone had entered the room while he slept.

He sprang bolt upright in bed and glared at the intruder.

It was a woman!

The water trickled from her loose locks; her wet garments clung closely to her anything but ghost-like figure; her bosom was stained with blood, and her great, greedy eyes glared savagely at Meers.

One look, then, with a gurgle of fear, the man fell back upon his couch and covered his eyes.

The figure drew nearer.

"Is this my greeting, Gaston Meers!" she said. "The stakes are doubled now. I want an extra hundred thousand to pay for this blow, or off you go to the scaffold!"

Meers dropped his hands and glared at her.

"It is not a dream," he muttered. "You still live, Mother Croaker?"

"Yes," repeated the woman, slowly, "I still live, Gaston Meers. You were smart enough with men, but a woman's wit was too much for you. I hold your paper, and——"

Meers sprang up in bed.

"Give it to me!" he cried. "I will have it! Give it to me, I say!"

Mother Croaker shook her head.

"I'd be a fool to bring it with me now, wouldn't I? I told you afore I was too much for you, honey. Now you can understand it."

"Who can prevent me killing you?" he cried.

"No one," was the calm reply. "I shan't stop you; but you ain't such a fool this time. Kill me if you like. Coward, why don't you strike?"

She held out her arms, but Meers did not offer to attack her.

"Honey, it's been a game of quits," the woman rejoined, "but Mother Croaker has played the best cards. You heard me say I wanted the extra hundred thousand, now hear what I say:

"It is midnight now. Unless I get every penny I want before the daylight breaks, I'll hang you."

Those words seemed to bring back Gaston Meers' courage.

With one bound he leaped from the bed, seized the woman by the throat, and bore her backward to the floor.

In vain she struggled, in vain she essayed to shout, his hand, like a band of steel, was at her throat.

The other sought her breast, dragged forth the fatal paper, and then he flung her off.

"I knew you lied," he hissed, as he rent the paper to atoms. "Now go! tell the police, and see whose word will be taken, for you have now no proof. Ha—ha! it is a game of quits, and I hold the winning hand!"

CHAPTER XIX.

WHICH TELLS HOW MOTHER CROAKER ESCAPED DEATH.

When Gaston Meers pushed Mother Croaker, the force pushed her from the pier and she fell with a heavy splash into the water.

Quick as a flash Jerry Sleepers sent his boat spinning towards the place where she had sunk, passing directly over her, so that she came up beneath the pier.

Her first impulse was to scream out for aid, but second thought, which we are told is best, suggested:

"Keep quiet. Let him, too, think you are dead."

And this she did.

But Mother Croaker was no weak woman.

She struggled, and seizing the logs more firmly, drew herself out of the water, clambered up outside of the pier, and utterly exhausted, sank down in a heap behind the pile of lumber.

She dared not move while Jerry Sleepers was looking for her, lest he should see and recognize her.

Ten minutes passed—fifteen—Sleepers began to feel uneasy.

"Jingo!" he muttered. "What if he has killed her? If I'm found mixed up in this job it may go hard with me, and I've no desire to make the acquaintance of Jack Catch."

He shipped his oars and paused for a moment to think over his situation.

"'Nix, says Betty Martin!'" he muttered. "This cove doesn't get mixed up in the affair."

And once more plying the oars, he pulled away at all speed down the river.

Mother Croaker waited till the sound of his oars had died out into stillness, then she emerged slowly from her hiding-place and staggered up the pier.

"You think yourself free, Gaston Meers," she muttered, the old light stealing into her eye, "but my grave isn't dug yet.

"Keep up yer courage while yer may, but there's them on yer track as'll grind it all out er yer!"

She shook the water from her garments and passed hurriedly up the street.

Upon reaching Broadway, she, too, hailed a hack, and was driven within a block of Meers' residence.

Stepping out upon the curb, she dismissed the driver, and glanced hurriedly up and down the street.

There was not a soul in sight.

Passing around to the rear of the house, she grasped the iron fence and dragged herself over into the garden.

At that moment Gaston Meers flung open the shutter, and in the full glare of the moon she caught a sight of his face.

"Curse him!" she hissed, slinking back in the shadow.

The hours spun by slowly enough to her, and keeping in the shadow of the shrubbery, she glided forward, seized the heavy stems of ivy, and placing her feet firmly among them, wounded and bleeding as she was, she drew herself up to his window.

The clock struck twelve as she stepped into the room, and the moonlight burst in upon her like a flood.

Then it was that Gaston Meers awoke.

What followed is already known to the reader.

CHAPTER XX.

BUTTS LOSES HIS COMPANION.

It will require no very great exertion upon the reader's part to recall the situation in which we left Butts and Ben Blunt.

The cannibals, startled at the figure circled in flames drifting towards them down the underground river, stopped, glared like madmen upon it for an instant, then with one accord, they seized their paddles and reversed their flight, quitting the dark passage at all speed.

The air was filled with their terrified shouts.

As for Ben Blunt, the moment the last one had left the underground stream, he sprang into the boat and rowed to Butts.

"Bravo, younker!" he cried, taking the boy in and dashing the water over the blazing oil. "Yer did it bang up, bust my bilers if yer didn't."

The burning oil spluttered for an instant, and then went out.

Fastening the rope to the stern of the boat, Ben pulled back to the cavern at all speed.

"Yer wer' saved by a whale that time, lad!" he cried, as he secured the floating mass at the entrance of the cave.

"Yes," murmured Butts. "Captain Dixie never thought that fish would prove my salvation. He meant it for my destruction; but you know the old adage: 'Man proposes, Heaven disposes.'"

"An' a right good 'un it is, too. Smash my tib if I ain't happy as a lark."

"And so should I," muttered Butts, sadly, "if I was sure that all was well with him."

Ben Blunt placed his hands upon his hips, and looked the boy squarely in the face.

"Now look a-here, Butts," he said, "you an' me ought not never to have no secrets one from t'other. I've hearn you say him so much lately that I jist wants to know wot's wot."

In a faltering voice Butts told the whole story, beginning with the night he saved Fred Temple from committing suicide, and ending with his own abduction.

"You know the rest, Ben," he said; "and now you can understand why I wish to get home in time to save Fred from being hung for a crime he never committed."

Poor little fellow! he never once thought that the law considered itself satisfied upon that score, and that a being had been executed for the murder of Horatio Temple, although as innocent of the crime as the babe yet unborn.

And perhaps it was as well he did not.

On the following morning Ben determined to revisit the island and ascertain if other white people inhabited it.

To this Butts was nothing averse, and the pair proceeded at once to make the journey.

It was about noon when they drew upon the banks of the inland sea, and after making a hearty meal upon the fruits around them, they turned their faces inland and began the journey.

The sun was blazing hot, and they had not gone more than a quarter of a mile before they were obliged to rest in the shade of the trees.

In ten minutes they were again on the tramp, having passed through a deep ravine, whose tree-fringed peaks sheltered them from the glare of the noon-day sun.

Having proceeded about a mile up this without finding even the slightest clew to advance the belief that other whites dwelt upon the island, they entered upon a natural stairway that passed directly up the western side of the ravine, and after a tedious journey upward, found themselves upon a densely-wooded ridge, facing upon a plateau of tall, luxurious grass.

This table land stretched out over an area of some five or six miles.

A stream wound across the center, and about a quarter of a mile off, they saw thin blue smoke curling up above the grass.

"Thar, I tole yer!" cried Ben, pointing toward it. "Look, Butts, there must be whites! Injuns can't make fire, kin they, without flint an' steel?"

Butts made no reply, and turning around, Ben saw that he was lying upon the ground, utterly exhausted with the long tramp and panting for breath.

"Hullo! used up, younker?"

Butts nodded his head.

"It's no use, Ben, I can't go another foot without rest."

"Sorry for it, lad, but it's best for me to go ahead. I'm certain there's whites thar, an' I'm goin' ter see.

"Lie still an' rest yerself. If yer feel better, why, toddle along after me, an' if yer don't, why, wait till I comes."

"All right, Ben, but keep a sharp lookout for the natives. Remember, we have no weapons, and it would go hard with us if we were caught."

Ben Blunt hitched up his trousers.

"You keep your eye peeled as well as I do mine, younker, an' it won't go werry hard on yer. As fur them pesky black critters, why, the Lord ha' mercy on 'em if I get a square blow at 'em. Bust my biler, I'll knock the hull caboodle of 'em into kingdom come less time 'an it takes to say 'My Jerushy!'"

And having delivered himself of this, the honest old tar sallied forth.

Butts kept still for a few moments, then he sat up, feeling much better for his rest.

He could see the old tar's head above the tall grass, and watched him until he was within a couple of yards of the fire.

Suddenly the head disappeared; he saw the grass stir with the movement of a body, and stood up to look.

He had walked headlong among the cannibals!

"Oh!" cried Butts, as he saw the cannibals chasing Ben. "Oh, he will be captured!" and he wrung his hands in anguish.

A very strange action, but, as the sequel will show, a very natural one.

Ben saw him standing there, and screamed at the top of his voice:

"Fly, lad, fly! Don't mind me—fly!"

Then the cannibals saw him too.

They separated into two parties, and a portion made at all speed toward Butts.

He saw the old tar overtaken by his pursuers; saw him fall, followed by several of the cannibals, then with a scream of dismay, Butts turned and fled.

How he descended the ravine he never knew; he only saw those dusky fiends behind him, and ran as he never had before.

It was a race for life.

Which side would win?

CHAPTER XXI.

BEN BLUNT'S DOOM.

Poor Butts fairly flew over the ground, his feet winged with fear, his white face turned down the ravine, and his arms open in a mute supplication for aid.

Steadily his pursuers gained upon him, and once as he cast a backward glance and saw how close they were, he groaned with despair.

"Merciful Heaven speed my footsteps—aid me to escape!" he cried, his fears breaking out afresh.

It is said that Heaven never deserts us in our needy hour.

Be that as it may, when he supplicated for aid in the Master's name, Butts, the newsboy, was not forgotten.

As he darted along the ravine, and just after the prayer had passed his lips, his eyes fell upon a strip of fir trees—some fifty feet removed from his present situation, and

breaking into a lusty spurt the pursued had fled towards them.

Fear lent him a wondrous speed, and, to his intense satisfaction, he reached the strip of woodland while his pursuers were yet a score of yards behind him.

This state of affairs, however, did not last long.

The natives crashed into the woods in hot pursuit, and Butts was obliged to dodge incessantly from tree to tree to escape the flight of keen lances and poisoned darts that were showered at him.

The boy was fairly bloodless with fear, but as the sequel will show, this was no matter of surprise.

"Oh!" he moaned, darting between two walls of rock that arose like giant buttresses in the midst of the miniature jungle, "is there no way of escape? Must I die like this? Save me, Heaven, save me?"

For a moment he stands with upraised hands, and eyes turned towards the blue sky, dimly seen through the interlaced boughs of the trees, then he hears the shouts of his pursuers ring nearer, and with a wild, animal-like cry, he bounds forward.

A crash, a shriek of terror, and all is still.

The savages, who had spied him as he sprang between the cliffs, hurried forward, but paused upon their entrance into the narrow pass and glared around.

The boy was gone!

Whither they knew not, and their wild, untutored minds, ever pregnant with thoughts of the supernatural, seemed, as in a body, to take one view of it, and the cry rang forth from their lips in a harsh, grating sound that was filled with apprehension.

But doubting St. Thomases exist everywhere, and the one that filled that position among the cannibals was not long in persuading the others to take up the trail.

They journeyed onward for hours, carefully scrutinizing every foot of ground in hopes of finding some trace of the lost boy, but none existed.

Wearied and disgusted with their unsuccessful skirmish, they returned toward sunset to their village.

Ben Blunt, whom the wretches had succeeded in overcoming, and who now lay bound hand and foot in one of the central tepees, listened with eagerness to the greeting they received, and his heart almost stopped beating, so great was his fear lest Butts had fallen into their hands.

"In that case," he muttered, "it's all up the spout with the bo's'n; and, Ben, my boy, the least you can do is to meet your fate like a man.

"You haven't lived the best life on record, but I kinder guess you're a bit off the wust, and arter all, there's a chance o' your gittin' inter the good place. But, if Butts ain't cotched, why, durn my skin, there's hope for your bacon yet!"

He stopped, sighed and fell back upon the pile of skins that served him for a couch.

"Well, it's all one," he murmured, setting his lips together until they were wreathed with a purple line—"well, it's all one if the boy's captured and if he ain't. He's only a poor, weak little fellow, unarmed and alone—how on 'arth could he save me from a hull band o' man-eaters? Pshaw! I was a fool to think it for a minute; but I hope he got free for his own sake. There may be a chance wind drift a vessel near this island, and the boy picked up and be carried to New York. It's hardly probable, though," he continued, closing his eyes despairingly, "but I hope so, and that can't hurt anyone."

A moment after a hand pushed aside the skins at the entrance, and a stalwart native entered the tepee.

Ben half raised himself, and glanced inquiringly at him.

He could not speak his language, but we are told that actions speak plainer, than words, and Ben's action the savage had no difficulty in interpreting.

It spoke as plainly as so many syllables.

"Have you caught the boy?"

The native drew nearer and thrust his hand in the face of the prisoner.

They were dripping with a red liquid, and presented the appearance of having been bathed in human blood.

Ben gave vent to a cry of horror, and fell back upon the couch.

"They've caught him—they've killed him!" he cried.

His face bore an agonized expression as the savage quitted the tepee, but it rapidly gave place to a broad grin of delight as the skins fell behind him, and his retreating footsteps died out on the evening air.

"Durn you for a pesky fool!" he cried. "Do you think I have knocked around the world for fifty years not to know the difference between blood and pokeberry juice? You pesky black varmints! yer haven't got the boy; he's got away from you and I know it! Hip—hip—hooray! I'm ready to pass in my chips now."

He closed his eyes and was soon fast asleep.

Slowly the daylight dragged out into darkness, and the moon, pure, white and radiant, lit up the sky.

When she was at her fullest, Ben was aroused by a hand laid roughly upon his shoulder and shaking him violently.

He opened his eyes and glared around.

The savage who had before approached him with ensanguined hands, was leaning over him.

"Halloo, old bandy!" cried Ben. "You back agin, hey? Well, what's the row now? Come, toot yer whistle, 'cause I'm in a devil of a hurry to get back to the land of Nod."

The cannibal stopped, raised him bodily and bore him to the entrance of the tepee.

Setting him once more upon the ground, he drew aside the skins and pointed to the full moon.

"Well, I see it!" cried Ben, "but what the devil has that got to do with me? It's full and I ain't; thar's the difference—eh?"

This latter exclamation was drawn from him by the savage counting off his fingers—one by one.

"Seven!" cried Ben. "What are yer gettin' through yer wool? See here, my gay old cockalorum, what have I got to do with seven moons? One's enough for me. I'm no hog!"

The next movement upon the part of the savage—although far from a pleasant one—fully acquainted Ben with his purpose.

In seven days he was to become a victim to the man-eaters.

His cheek turned pale at the knowledge, but he determined not to let the savage triumph over his despair.

"So I've got to croak, eh?" he ventured. "Well, make it pleasant, give me plenty of heat and I won't growl."

The native looked at him, utterly amazed at his cool-

ness, and then, having borne him back to his couch of skins, left the tepee.

"Ben, my boy," faltered the old tar, when he was once more alone, "your time's come at last. You're nigh onto sixty years of age, and you haven't been handled like a baby in all that time. You're pretty tough, and I hope yer ole carcase will stick in some of their black throats an' choke the beasts."

CHAPTER XXII.

BUTTS MEETS ARTHUR NAUNTON.

Return we now to Butts, who so mysteriously disappeared when pursued by the cannibals.

Broken boughs and the leaves of many summers lay in a sodden mass upon the earth before him, but he saw not this as he sped along until the branches crushed beneath his weight, and he felt himself sinking.

Then it was he flung up his arms, and a last, despairing cry broke from his lips.

A moment only that sound gave echo, then his feet struck the solid earth beneath, while the leaves piled thickly around his throat, and he knew that he had merely fallen into a shallow indentation in the earth.

Quick of wit, the boy drew down his head and pushed back the half-decayed mass above him.

He was effectually concealed now in an aperture not more than a yard in width, but his heart still beat with fear, lest some mischance should discover his hiding-place to the wily savages.

But, as we have already seen, such a mishap was not fated to befall him.

When the echo of their footsteps had died away into the somber silence that before pervaded the jungle, Butts lifted his head above the leaves and peered around.

There was not a soul in sight.

He hailed this knowledge with joy.

Fate played into his hands.

Gently drawing himself forth from his not over-nice hiding-place, he shook the earth and leaves from his garments, and retraced his steps through the narrow pass.

In a few moments he was once more at its entrance.

Without delay, he darted towards the ravine, up which, a few hours previous, he and the boatswain had come so full of gayety and hope.

Butts passed safely down the jagged side, crossed at all speed, and began climbing up the opposite one, which was densely clothed with vendure, whose tropical nature afforded every chance for concealment.

Having entered this thicket, for such indeed it was, Butts carefully threaded his way seaward, keeping the meanwhile a close lookout for poisonous reptiles, which he knew were here in abundance.

It was drawing on to night when he reached the little inland sea, and to his surprise and joy, the boat lay as they left it in the morning, drawn half out upon the pebbly beach.

It required but little strength to push her off, and springing in, Butts seized the oars and directed the little craft towards the entrance to the underground river.

Tears rolled freely down his cheeks as he urged the boat along in the darkness, and his grief often gave vent to itself in open sobs.

Not, however, until he had reached the cavern of delight did the utter loneliness of his situation come fully upon him.

The poor little fellow flung himself down upon his bed of grass, and wept as though his heart would break.

"Don't let him die, Heaven!" he moaned, lifting his streaming eyes towards the sky. "If I have done wrong in so long being what I am, punish me only, and not seek to whip me over the shoulders of another. The secret is mine, the shame is mine also. He is not to blame; let me at once suffer!"

But we are not allowed to mark out our own punishment, or to weave our own destinies in this world, and if what Butts had done—and that the sequel will show—needed punishment, he was unable to avert it.

His grief assumed many forms, and at length, utterly worn out, he fell fast asleep.

About midnight a storm arose, and when Butts opened his eyes the next morning, the rain was pouring down in a perfect deluge.

He was far too miserable to quit the cavern that day, and as he ate but little of the large quantity of food stored there, there was no immediate necessity of his doing so.

So the daylight again dragged out into the darkness, and night came on, the memorable night when Arthur Naunton was wrecked on the coast of the strange land.

Butts was sleeping soundly when the shrieks of the cannibals awakened him, and starting to his feet he sprang to the mouth of the cavern and took all in at a single glance, for the lightning made all as plain as day.

To mount the whale, to fire the oil, was but the work of a moment, and as the cannibals poised their lances and directed them at the body of the young man upon the floating grating, the Wizard of the Waves, Butts, the newsboy, appeared.

A towering billow dashed upon the burning mass, and in another instant the flames were extinguished.

Not daring to loosen the whale from the rope lest it should drift off in this terrible storm, Butts had no difficulty in drawing himself back to the cavern.

Quitting the whale, he sprang into the boat, seized the oars, and directed by the vivid lightning, pulled towards Arthur.

The young man saw him coming, and clung like death upon the ragged edges of the rock.

"Help! for the love of Heaven!" he shrieked, as each succeeding wave caused his fingers to slip and become lacerated upon the keen stone.

"Help, or I perish!"

"Courage!" shouted back Butts, as each moment brought them nearer together, "courage, there is help at hand!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

FACE TO FACE.

It was no mean effort upon the part of Butts, this venturing forth upon a night like this to the rescue of a human being, but then Butts was no ordinary personage.

His life had been tinged with such romances as but few persons are permitted to experience; his every impulse was

above the run of common people, and he, himself, a creature all pity for the misfortune of others.

In a very few minutes he reached Arthur's side and dragged him into the boat.

"Seize an oar!" he cried. "Pull for dear life!"

Nothing loath, Arthur did as he was bidden, and the twain soon reached the cavern.

Butts secured the boat at the entrance, and then began clambering into the cave, whither Arthur Naunton had already preceded him.

Hardly had his foot touched the ledge, ere a mighty report went booming over the angry deep.

It was the sound of a cannon.

"A signal of distress!" shrieked Butts. "There is a ship at hand. Fire the grasses—quick!"

At that moment a vivid flash of lightning lit up the waves, and they saw in the distance a vessel dashing toward the reefs.

Seizing the dried grass, Butts ignited it, and the tall flames towered up toward the sky.

The pilot saw the reefs, the open bay beyond, and a ringing cheer echoed from the decks, as, guided by the beacon pile, the gallant ship passed the rocks and came sailing toward them in the deep, dangerous gulf between the reefs.

"We are saved!" cried Butts, springing to the side of Arthur.

The blaze of the grass played over both their faces, and with a shriek, Butts threw himself into the castaway's arms.

Then two cries echoed on the blast.

"Fred Temple!"

"Butts! thank Heaven, I have found you!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRED TEMPLE'S STORY.

Butts was frantic with joy.

He kissed Fred's hand and face, and leaped around like a madman.

"Thank Heaven, they did not hang you!" he cried.

"Ah! but they came near enough doing so!" moaned Fred; "even to hanging another man by mistake. But see, the vessel is coming to anchor!"

And sure enough she was.

Right in the little bay, and between the treacherous reefs, they cast the anchor, and then, over the angry waves, came a little boat to meet them.

They scrambled down the rocks, sprang in, and were soon aboard the vessel.

The captain was standing near the rail, and seized Butts' hand as he came on deck.

"You've saved the Wizard, my boy!" he cried, gripping the newsboy's soft palm tighter than ever in his own tough one. "You've sawed the Wizard, and may God bless you!"

Butts drew back with a cry of fear, and faltered:

"Captain Dixie!"

"Ah—ay!" was the surprised cry of the captain. "But who are you that know my name?"

He took a step forward, peered into the boy's face, and then, with a yell of delight, sprang back and cheered lustily:

"Hurrah! Serve out the grog; let every man have what he wishes. We're saved, lads, it's Butts!"

The crew took up the cry and crowded around the boy, eager to assure themselves that he was living.

Butts regained his sudden change with much surprise.

"You seem overjoyed to meet me," he said, turning towards Captain Dixie. "A few weeks back you were only too glad to cast me adrift with poor old Ben Blunt. What is the meaning of this change?"

"Hurrah, boys!" shouted Dixie. "Blunt went with him. Well, Butts, my lad, you must know that I was paid a tidy little sum to do what I did, by them thar two landsharks Gaston Meers and Harry Chester. Well, I kept my word, as you well know."

"Yes," groaned Butts.

"I set you adrift, but arter that the devil seemed to run the Wizard; we had no luck. A fever broke out among us and we lost several of the boys. I never looked to get well agin myself. But I warn't fit to die, and when I got out of my berth, I says to myself, says I, 'Dixie, my boy, thar's no luck fur yer till yer find that ar kid.'

"So I put the question to vote, an' the hull crew moved that we give up whalin' an' find you. That's how it came about; but in the storm this mornin' we lost our mainmast, got out of our reckonin', and would have foundered on them thar blasted rocks if it hadn't been fur that ar beacon light o' yourn.

"But come, I say; you jist spoke of Ben Blunt. Whar is he now?"

"Alas!" moaned Butts, "he's in the hands of the cannibals that people this island."

"Jewhillaker! yer don't say so! Phew! when did it happen?"

"Yesterday. Oh, Captain Dixie, if I have been of service to you, it is now possible for you to repay it."

"That's me!" cried the seaman. "Go on, toot yer whistle, an' if it's in my power, if mortal man kin do it, I'm your oyster."

"Well, then, organize a band, arm and equip them, march against the cannibals, and rescue Ben."

Captain Dixie grasped the boy by the hand.

"Thar!" he cried. "Consider it done. You and this gentleman here, tumble into your berths, and as soon as morning breaks we'll be off after the pesky cusses."

Butts shook his head and followed the mate to Captain Dixie's cabin, which he had given up to them.

When they were alone, Butts seized Fred Temple's hand and pulled him down into a chair.

Drawing another up beside him, the newsboy began to question the young heir.

"You said a short while ago, Fred," he said, "that the authorities had hung another man by mistake. Tell me how it all happened, there's a good fellow."

"I shall have to go back to my childhood to do so," returned Fred, "but I will make the story as brief as possible.

"There were three children born to my parents before I came into the world, but ill luck seemed to pursue my father, whom I learned loved them dearly, for one by one they sickened and died.

"Soon after the last had passed from this world, I came into it; but not alone, for I was followed

some five minutes after by a plump little fellow, my exact counterpart—in a word, we were twins.

"My mother did not live long after our birth, but my father clung to us with a heart that must love something, and having nothing better upon which to shower his affection, loved us.

"Walter, my brother, was hot-headed, impulsive, fond of wine, and, alas! like me, fond also of the gaming-table.

"Some three years back, he got into a brawl with a professional gamester, who branded him with the name of thief, and in a fit of despair, rage, madness, Walter drew his revolver, shot the man dead, and fled the country, going no one knew where, and the law, that so strenuously groped after him, never succeeded in finding him out.

"This blow almost broke my father's heart, but—evil day—he took my cousin Gaston in the place of his boy, and forbade even the mention of Walter's name in our household.

"This should have been a lesson to me, but youth's eyes are covered with the scales of pleasure, and I gambled on till the fatal end came upon me.

"My father branded me as his murderer, but you, Butts, know differently.

"Well, we sought for, but could not find you. I was tried, condemned to death on the scaffold, when that mad brother came back to the city.

"The night before the execution, he accompanied Dr. Fisher to my cell, being disguised in a heavy coat, and determined to expiate his own crime by saving me from death for one I never committed.

"They drugged me, my brother took my place, and when I awoke to reason he had been executed in my stead. Oh, Heaven! my poor—poor, misled brother!

"Dr. Fisher persuaded me, when all was over, to leave the country for a time, till the whole affair had become a thing of the past in the public mind, then to return and work out my revenge.

"I left New York, but the bitter fate I so bemoaned cast me on this island and saved me. In your hands lies the rest, Butts; you alone can save my name now."

They succeeded in rescuing Ben Blunt from the savages the next morning.

That morning a surprise for all hands took place, for Captain Dixie came out of the cabin leading by the hand the former Butts, but now arrayed in female garments. He introduced her as Miss Bertie Delmayne. Fred was overjoyed. He had become very much attached to the former newsboy. Next day they set sail for New York.

The cruise home was a merry one, and when they stepped into New York, one bright, sunshiny morning, Fred led Bertie and Ben directly to the house of Dr. Fisher, where they were received with great joy.

"You have come most opportunely!" he cried, shaking Fred by the hand; "I have just dismissed a visitor."

"Indeed; who was it?"

"Mother Croaker. She will return at five o'clock with the hope high in her bosom of destroying Gaston Meers. He defied and robbed her a few nights back; now she seeks revenge. No wonder we could not find 'Butts.' Breakfast awaits. At six o'clock to-night we must be with Gaston Meers."

Gaston Meers sits alone in the library.

The clock is just about to strike the hour of six, when a gentle tap falls upon the door.

"Who's there?" he cried, for of late every sound filled him with apprehension.

The whirr of the clock answered him, then the little silver bell chimed forth:

1—2—3—4—5—six!

The door flew open, and there, in the full light that streamed down upon them, stood Fred Temple, Mother Croaker and "Butts, the Newsboy!"

The wretched man leaped back and strove to dash them away.

"Go—go!" he shrieked, fastening his eyes upon Fred's face.

"You are dead—you are dead! executed in my stead!"

"It is false! I live; Walter was executed in my stead."

Meers drew back with a gasp.

"Then it was for nothing I murdered Horatio Temple."

Then he sprang towards the window communicating with the balcony without, leaped—fairly into the arms of a posse of police!

"The time and the hour!" cried Fred, pointing to the dial of the clock. "Saved at Six."

Reader, my task is almost done.

A few short words and I must lay aside my pen with a sigh, for it is not pleasant to part with the characters of many weeks, and so soon to take up with new ones.

Gaston Meers paid the penalty of his crime upon the scaffold, from which Harry Chester barely escaped, although he lives to-day under sentence for life.

Mother Croaker would surely have been incarcerated also had she not availed herself of the chance of escape, and gone, no one knows where.

Ben Blunt has left the sea, and passes his life with Fred and Bertie Temple, for she whom we knew so long as "Butts" is now the wife of the young heir.

The fatal passion for gambling has forever left him—the lesson was bitter, but it proved a cure.

"I only fear that my son may also love the cards," he says, "and that would kill me!"

But Ben Blunt, who dandles the little bundle of flannel and lace upon his knee, looks up with a smile, and says:

"Bust my biler! Yer mistook thar, Mr. Fred. He's a little h'angel, so he is, and as he grows up, I'll teach him a lesson that will knock gamblin' higher'n a kite."

"And what will it be, Ben?"

"Why, the story of our lives, and how his dear daddy was saved at six!"

THE END.

Read "THE GOLDEN SKULL; OR, A BOY'S ADVENTURES IN AUSTRALIA," which will be the next number (45) of "All Around Weekly."

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CHOICE READING MATTER.

When Lieutenant Berryman was sounding the ocean preparatory to laying the Atlantic telegraph, the quill at the end of the sounding line brought up mud which, on being dried, became a powder so fine that on rubbing it between the thumb and finger it disappeared in the crevices of the skin. On placing this dust under the microscope, it was discovered to consist of millions of perfect shells, each of which had a living animal.

Two Isaak Waltons while fishing in the White Salmon River, Washington, the other day for rainbow trout unexpectedly captured game of a different variety. Some three miles up the river from where the fishermen were casting their lines in a box canyon, where the stream is very swift, logs were shooting by at a rapid rate and the sports also saw a deer come floating down in apparently an exhausted condition. One of the fishermen risked his life by wading out and pulling the animal ashore. One leg was found broken and the deer was put out of its misery.

A recent report of the Scotch fishery board mentioned a curious habit which, according to fishermen, is associated with fish. The phases of the moon, it was asserted, have a very direct connection with the willingness of fish to be netted. To test this theory statistics were obtained of the catch of herrings from 1860 to 1900, with the result that the biggest catches were found to have coincided with new moon and the smallest with full moon. The report suggested that a full moon enabled the nets to be seen much more easily than at the times of new moon or the crescent phase or that the tides, which vary with the lunar phases, were possible factors in the matter.

In one of Chicago's giant hotels a device has recently been installed which will liberate steam into the radiators during the winter and cold brine or liquid air during the summer, thus heating the room through the cold months and cooling them during the hot. This thermostat is so constructed that for each variation in the degree of temperature a corresponding change is made in the quantity of cold or hot material introduced into the radiators, thus maintaining an even temperature throughout the year. Many advantages, it is believed, will be had from this arrangement, probably greatest of which will be the diminution of the number of colds suffered by the lodgers, throat troubles of this nature being believed due mainly to sudden changes in room temperature.

Careful investigation was made by the Biological Survey during 1908 of the present distribution of big game, especially deer and antelope, and the number killed during the hunting season. East of the Mississippi (omitting New Hampshire, Georgia and North Carolina) 60,000 deer were killed in 1908. Antelope are still found in fourteen Western States, though the total number is approximately only 17,000. Nothwithstanding the fact that the antelope is protected throughout the year in practically all the States in which it now occurs, special efforts are necessary to save this fine game animal from extinction. In the decade from 1898 to 1908 the antelope of Colorado, according to estimates of the State game warden, decreased from 25,000 to 2,000.

RIB TICKLERS.

City Editor—The street is all excitement. An electric light wire has blocked traffic, and no one knows whether it is a live wire or not. Editor—Detail two reporters to go to the wire immediately—one to feel of it and the other to write up the result.

"You can pretty safely bet," began the man who thought he knew, "that any woman who doesn't gush over a pretty baby is a confirmed old maid." "Not always," replied the real wiseacre; "she may be a mother who has a baby she thinks is prettier."

"Yes," said the gilded youth, passing his hand wearily across his forehead, "we men who have to toil for our money——" "Toil for money!" shouted his companion. "Why, have you ever done a stroke of work in your life? I thought you got all your money from your father?" "I do," sighed the youth. "But do you happen to know my father?"

Representative Washburn, toastmaster at the prorogation dinner of the Legislature told a story of a pastor who, coming to a new parish, got his words slightly twisted in his announcement. Said he: "I have come here to heal the dead, cast out the sick and raise the devil." Another ministerial friend of Washburn's, speaking to a congregation, remarked: "I am sorry to see so many absent faces I used to shake hands with."

Among the interested spectators at an art exhibition in New York were two young fellows, evidently of rural origin, whose attention seemed to be especially attracted to a canvas entitled "Two Dogs, after Landseer." As the two studied the painting they seemed perplexed as to one particular. Said one young man: "Bill, I kin see the two dogs, but where is Landseer?" Whereupon the other continued his close scrutiny of the painting. "Tom," said he finally, "I got it. This is one of them puzzle pictures I hears so much about."

A dentist was visited by a native of the rural district to be treated for an ulcerated tooth. "That's a bad tooth," said the man of the forceps, "and I should advise you to spare yourself pain by taking gas. It will be only 50 cents more." And the dentist showed his machine to the doubtful visitor, explaining its workings—how he would fall asleep for a minute or two, and then awake with the tooth and the pain gone. At last the patient consented and took out his wallet. "Never mind paying now," said the dentist, patronizingly. "I wasn't thinking of paying," responded the countryman, "but I thought if I was going to sleep I'd like to count my money first."

A BRAVE CORSICAN

By John Sherman.

One hundred and fifteen years ago a large French army was engaged in conquering the island of Corsica. The stout Corsicans had revolted against their masters, the Genoese, and made themselves so troublesome that the Genoese were glad to sell to the French all their "right, title and interest," as the lawyers say, in the island, on the condition that the French should take everything just as they found it, insurrection and all. So the French forces landed in order to take possession of their purchase, and advanced rapidly through the country, meeting little resistance, for the Corsican general, Paoli, was assembling his army in the interior of the island, and was not yet ready to give battle. Town after town submitted to the enemy, until the Frenchmen began to congratulate each other upon the easy task they were having.

"We heard that there barbarians were perfect lions," they laughed. "Lions, indeed! Why, they are absolute sheep! What fools the Genoese were to allow themselves to be frightened away."

But in the tower, or small fort, of Nanza, there was a certain Captain Casella who had been placed there by General Paoli to keep the invaders at bay as long as he could, that the Corsican army might have time to organize and strengthen itself. The captain was selected for this duty because he was a very brave man—but unfortunately he was the only one in the fort. The troops under him were militiamen who had never seen any service and never wished to see any. When, therefore, they heard one evening that the French would arrive next morning, they came to their commander in a body and asked him to capitulate.

"We are two hundred against twenty thousand," they said. "Then, we have only one cannon, and they must have whole batteries of them. What can we do?"

"Do?" exclaimed Casella. "Do? Why, fight, of course! We have all the arms we can use, and plenty of ammunition besides. If we act as we should we can hold the Frenchmen in check at least two days—and what if we are killed then? We shall have done our duty and gained great glory."

This was by no means an attractive prospect to the militiamen, who placed life very much above duty and preferred sound limbs to all the glory in the world. So they renewed their demand for a capitulation.

"Hark ye, cowards!" answered the gallant captain. "So far from capitulating I will blow up the fort, myself, and every one of you, before I will surrender without striking a blow. Now, back to your posts!"

This was a still more unattractive prospect than the other, to the prudent garrison. Between the two, they would, of course, rather fight than be blown up—yet, not liking either alternative, they took a middle course and deserted that night to the last man.

But, although Captain Casella was thus left alone, he had no more intention of giving up without a struggle, than before. His orders were to fight, and fight he would. He put a double charge into the cannon, and placed the loaded muskets that his men had left behind near the loop-holes, ready for use. And at sunrise he hoisted the Corsican flag to the very top of the staff.

Not long after he had finished these preparations the advance guard of the French army showed itself around a curve of the road, within easy range. Casella blew the signal for action on his trumpet, and immediately touched off the cannon, which, with a tremendous bang, sent two heavy iron balls plump into the midst of the approaching ranks. Before the smoke cleared away, musket after musket went off in rapid succession, as fast as Casella could run from loop-hole to loop-hole and pull the triggers, while in an incredibly short time the cannon roared again, and another great ball crashed into the enemy. Every now and then Casella blew blasts of defiance on the trumpet with what little breath he had to spare from his work, and, in short, he was so wonderfully active and fired so often and from so many different places, that it seemed as if the tower was crowded with veteran soldiers.

The French commander thought so, at any rate, and his respect for Corsicans rose considerably, as he saw more men than he liked to lose lying on the ground around him. True, he had a large force, and the main army would soon arrive; but if that fiery little fort would only surrender, things would be more pleasant for all parties. If the garrison fought so hard at long range, they would be perfect tigers when they came to close quarters. He, therefore, sent forward a flag of truce and a bugler, who sounded the call for a parley. Casella replied with his trumpet and stopped firing—which he was extremely glad to do, being nearly tired out. He appeared upon the walls and asked what was wanted. The French officer summoned him to surrender, telling him that the whole country to the northward had submitted and advising similar action on his part. Casella appeared greatly astonished at this news, and replied that if matters were so serious, he would call a council of war, and, if his officers thought it best to surrender he would do so. He retired inside the fort, and, after remaining a few minutes, came out again and said he would surrender if the garrison was allowed to march out with the honors of war—that is, under arms, with music and banners. This was agreed to. Thereupon, the flag was seen to come down from the staff, and the cannon saluted it several times.

The French troops now drew themselves up in line to receive the garrison, which they thought must be under excellent discipline, since not a man save the commander had shown himself upon the walls.

The signal was given. The gate opened, and Casella, dressed in full uniform, marched proudly out, with his sword by his side, bearing the trumpet in one hand and the Corsican flag in the other. The French presented arms and watched eagerly to see his bold followers—but there were none.

"Why does not the garrison of Nanza march out, as was agreed?" asked the French officer.

"It has," returned Casella. "I am the garrison of Nanza!"

Well, this was a dreadful humiliation to the French, but, the general-in-chief arriving, the capitulation was carried out, and the brave captain sent in safety to General Paoli, together with a letter warmly praising his heroic devotion to duty.

This actually occurred as related, and is a matter of history—but history, as is often the case, does not tell us all we want to know.

JIM AND THE PANTHER

There registered at one of the hotels of this city, some time ago, a man who has gained quite a notoriety among his neighbors as a brave hunter and a crack shot. This man is James Henry, or, as he is better known in Sonoma county, "Dead-shot Jim," a title which he earned by the remarkable skill which he displayed with his rifle.

Dead-shot Jim is a short, stout man, with a keen, gray eye, and a mouth which displays great determination. He went to Sonoma county when but a boy, and settled at what is now known as Sea View, when the primeval forests of the coast range had not been touched by the woodman's ax, and the

denizens of the woods roamed undisturbed by the approach of man.

To an inquiring reporter, Mr. Henry spoke freely of his life in the Sonoma woods, and related a story of a fight with a monster panther, in which he had a narrow escape from death, after the dogs had been killed by the maddened beast.

"I will never forget that fight," said Mr. Henry, as he settled himself comfortably in a chair, "for I have a reminder in the shape of two scars on my breast, which were put there by the sharp claws of the animal.

"My two dogs had treed him on the other side of a deep gulch, which I would have to cross on a shaky fallen tree to reach him.

"I worked my way to the fallen tree, and started to cross it. I went very slowly, as the log was quite slippery. My dogs had ceased their noise when I first came in view, but just as I was about half way across the bridge, they began to bark more fiercely than ever. I thought that perhaps the animal had seen me, and was about to jump out of the tree and make his escape.

"I stopped in my dangerous walk, and steadying myself, looked up into the tree.

"Great Scott! I had seen a great many panthers before and had killed a few, but the one I saw looking at me from the branches of the oak was larger and fiercer than any I had ever seen or heard tell about. He lay crouched along a branch about midway to the top of the oak, and glared at me with his great eyes, that gleamed like balls of fire. From the moment he first beheld me he paid not the slightest attention to the dogs, but kept his eyes riveted on me, uttering deep, low growls and swaying his long tail to and fro.

"I knew that I had no time to lose, but must act quickly, as the varmint was preparing to spring at me. Bracing myself for the shot as best I could on the slippery tree, I raised the rifle to my shoulder and aimed for the center of the brute's head. Just as I pulled the trigger a piece of rotten bark that I was standing on gave way, and I slipped at the moment when the rifle vomited its load of fire and lead. In saving myself from falling the empty gun slipped from my grasp to the rocks below, and I would have followed it had I not luckily fallen astraddle of the tree.

"I drew my hunting-knife from my belt, but had no sooner done so when the panther gave a shriek of mingled pain and rage, and the next moment he bounded from his perch and landed on the ground within three feet of one end of the log on which I sat.

"The ball from my rifle had made a slight wound in the brute's head, the blood from which ran into the brute's eyes, making him look terrible in his maddened fury. His eyes were fastened on me, and I knew that his next spring would bring him within a foot or two of where I sat.

"My faithful dogs were by this time at the rear of the infuriated beast, and before he could leap upon me they attacked him boldly. He turned with a flash, and with a yell of defiance struck one of the dogs such a blow with his claws that it knocked the poor pup dead into the river below. The other dog had got a grip on one of the panther's hind legs and held on gamely. The next moment the dog and the panther were rolling on the ground in a struggle for the mastery. The huge beast threw up clouds of earth and dead leaves with his sharp claws, and for a time the combatants were lost to view in the dust. The struggle soon ceased, and through the falling leaves I could see the writhing dog between the jaws of the panther. The jaws came together and I could hear the crunching of bones, and in another moment the limp body of the dog was thrown on the ground.

"The panther was now thoroughly enraged. Giving his head a shake to free his eyes from the blood and dirt, he gave a yell that nearly froze my blood, and crouched for a spring.

"I grasped my knife firmly in my right hand, and, steadying myself with my left, awaited the shock.

"It came. The long, lithe body flashed through the air, and the next moment I was sitting face to face with the infuriated beast. Leaning forward quickly, I plunged the keen blade once, twice, into the animal's neck. The hot blood spurted into my face. I felt the breath of the panther on my cheek, and then the powerful paws, armed with the long, sharp nails, rose in the air and descended on my chest. I felt the sharp claws burning through my flesh. The knife fell from my weakened grasp and bounded on the rocks to the river below. I felt my brain whirling. I made a desperate grab at the panther before me, and, locked in a close embrace, we rolled off the log and fell together on the rocks below.

"The sun was far down the horizon when I recovered consciousness. I was not very seriously hurt, for in the fall I landed on top of the panther, which saved me from having my bones broken. The huge beast lay dead on the rocks beside me. My knife had touched the heart, and no doubt he was dead before he struck the rocks.

"I bandaged my wounds and took the skin off of the panther as a trophy of the fight."

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